Pocket

Web Projects

The complete, jargon-free guide to...

PHOTOSHOP

CREATE AMAZING WEB GRAPHICS

Free with Practical internet issue 75

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WELCOME...

Welcome to the second installment of *Pocket Web Projects* – a new concept in free books. This time round we're putting Adobe's peerless image-editor Photoshop and its little brother Photoshop Elements under the microscope.

If you happen to be a veteran Photoshop jockey then you'll know only too well just what can be achieved with this remarkable program. If you're a newbie, then you're in for a treat. Whether you are a digital photographer wanting to improve on the composition of your pictures or a Web designer keen to spice up the graphics on a Web site, it's safe to say that Photoshop is pretty much the only application you'll ever need.

Over the next 100 or so pages we'll be using simple step-by-step projects to show you how to do anything from enhance the look of scanned images to design a stunning front-end for your Web site. We've included advice for the latest two versions of Photoshop – 6.0 and 7.0 – and also on Photoshop Elements 1.0 and 2.0. Even if you only have a copy of one of these versions, or an older edition, much of the advice in this book should still apply. If you haven't got a copy at all, there are PC demos of Photoshop 7.0 and Elements 2.0 included on this month's cover CD for your enjoyment.

Enjoy working through these projects and please drop me a line if there are any topics that you'd like us to cover in future books.

Paul Newman, Group Editor
pauln@paragon.co.uk

PHOTOSHOP CHAPTER ONE

PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS 1.0

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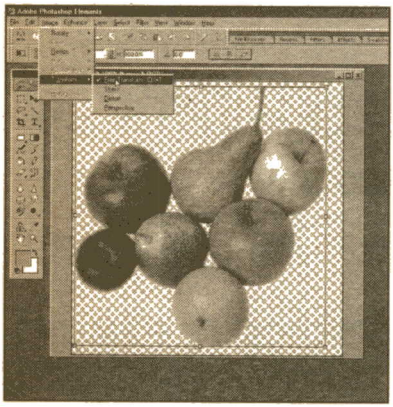
BASIC PHOTO-EDITING TIPS

OUR FIRST PROJECT EXPLAINS HOW TO PREPARE YOUR PHOTOS FOR THE WEB WITH THE IMAGE-TWEAKING TOOLS IN PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS



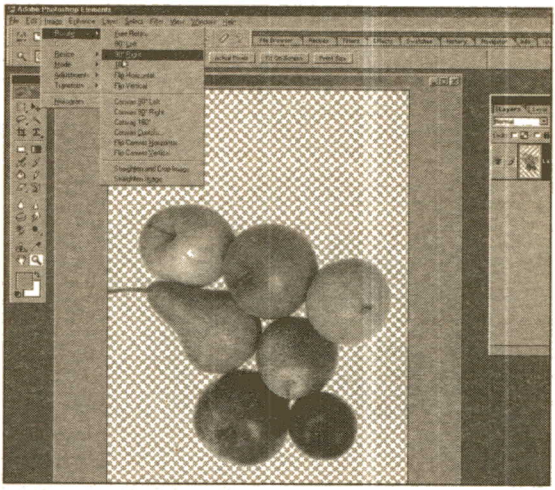
One of the most easily accessible features of Photoshop Elements 1.0 is the ability to alter and tweak digital images. Just about all of us have downloaded photos from a digital camera, only to discover that our eagerly anticipated works of art have gone completely awry.

With Photoshop Elements, it's easy to rid digitised imagery of anything that shouldn't be there. In this chapter, we'll be showing you how to correct your digital photos in a number of ways, and then make them suitable for use on the Web.

To begin with, we're going to take a look at composition. This deals with the overall frame and angle of the picture and can be especially useful if you've scanned in a load of pictures and don't want ugly white borders to spoil your digital images. Also, if you've ever taken a picture that had a load of peripheral details cluttering the view, it's possible to use Photoshop Elements to clear the picture. And don't worry if you were a bit skewwhiff when taking your pictures – the 'Rotate' tool can soon straighten things out.

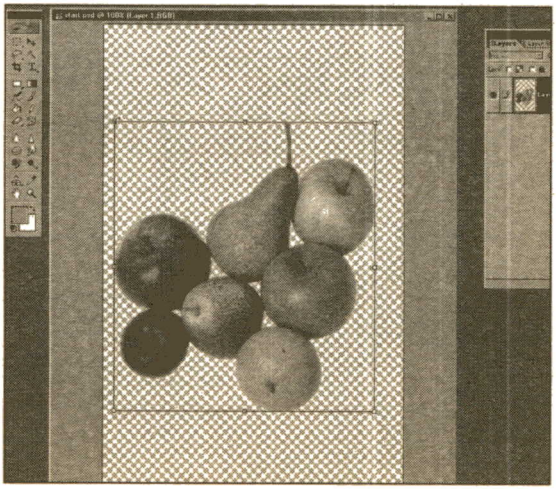
This is just the beginning, though. Read on for more of what Elements can do for your pictures.

01 ROTATE BY ANGLE



This image is all over the place. The most obvious problems is that it's the wrong way up. To correct this, go to the 'Image' menu, select 'Rotate', then choose either of the 90 degree options (you'll have to experiment a bit to see which one works for your image).

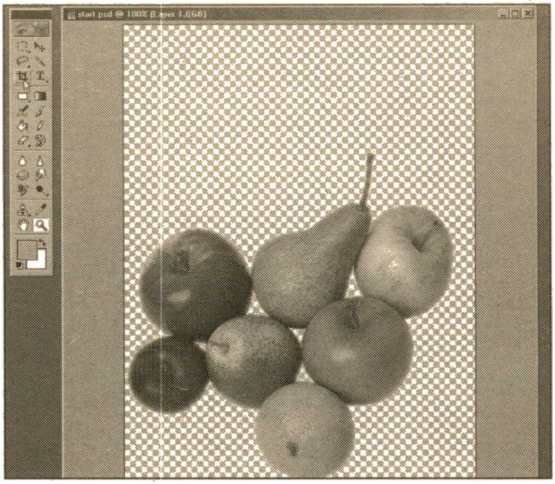
02 FREE ROTATE



This fruit is still pretty strange, so go to 'Image', 'Rotate', then choose 'Free Rotate'. This gives you a set of handles with which you can manually 'twist' your image until it sits at just the right angle.

03 THE CROP TOOL

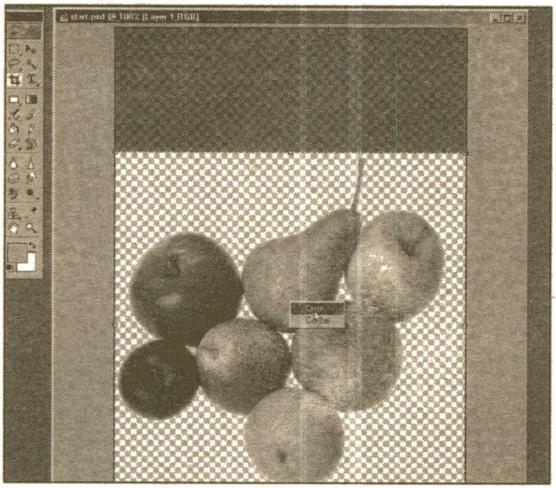
You'll notice that we now have a huge blank space above and below the content of our picture. It's relatively easy to remedy this, though. Go to the main toolbar to the left of the Photoshop Elements interface, and click on the 'Crop' tool, as shown here.



04 THE CROPPING AREA

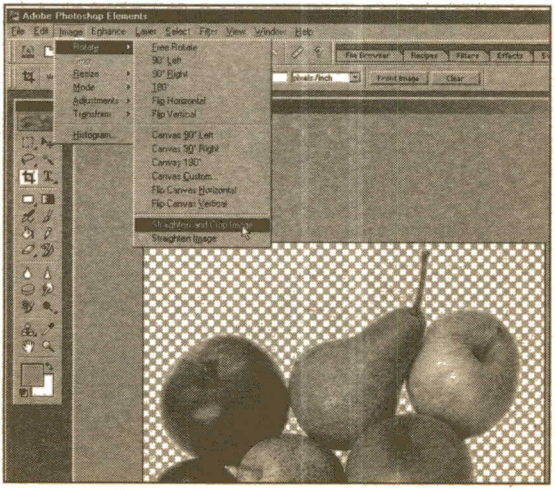
Now, draw a rectangle around the area of the image that you want to keep. It's easy to see what you've chosen in Elements, as everything else within the image is greyed out. If you need to adjust the dimensions of this box, just drag the edges.

05 CROPPING



There are two ways to perform the crop. You can either double-click anywhere in the selected area, or right-click, and choose 'Crop' from the drop-down menu. Either way, everything that isn't highlighted will be discarded.

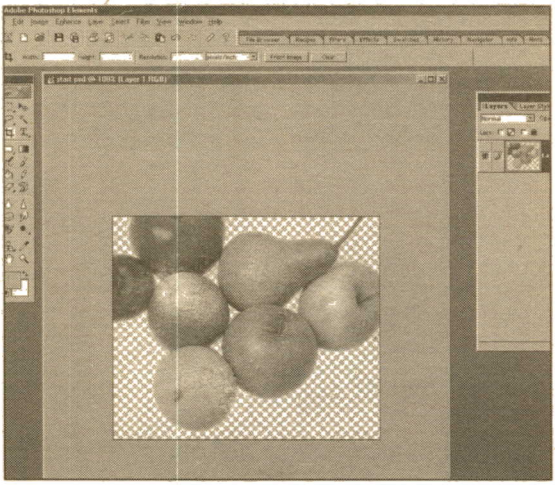
06 NO EASY WAY OUT



If you find all of this too taxing, there is an easier method. Go to 'Image', and from the 'Rotate' menu, choose the option 'Straighten and Crop Image'. Be warned, though, this leaves a lot to chance, so it's still better to do it manually.

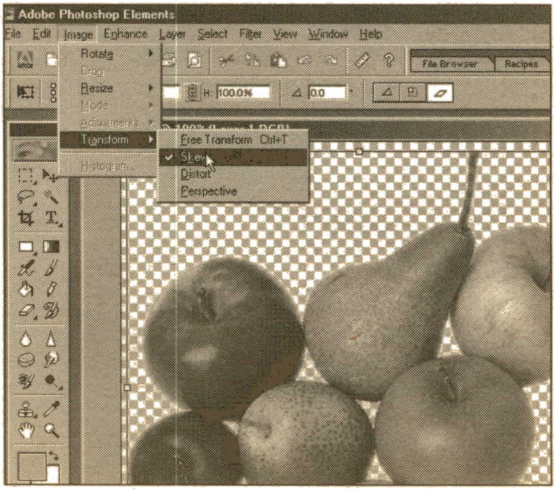
07 AND HERE'S WHY

We ran the 'Straighten and Crop Image' tool on our fruit, and here's what the program came up with. This is why you're better off going the long way. Press 'CTRL' and 'Z' to undo this, and then get back to the previous state.

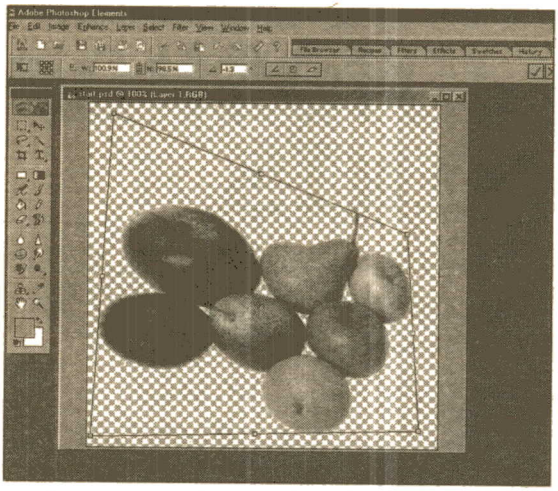


08 TRANSFORM THE IMAGE

Photoshop Elements packs a range of tools that allow you to transform the basic look and shape of the image. Go to 'Image', 'Transform', then choose 'Skew'. This lets you skew your image slightly to the side, which is useful for any pictures taken at an angle.

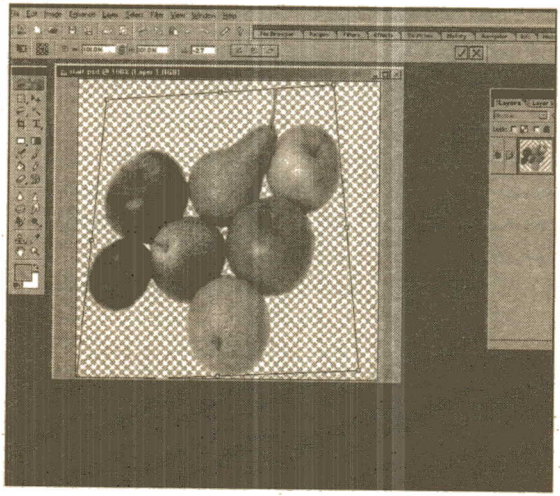


09 DISTORTION



The 'Distortion' tool is perhaps the most radical of the 'Transform' options. This tool, found in the same menu as 'Skew', lets you completely change the way that your image is viewed. Play around with it to see how the tool works – you'll probably have to undo this, so don't be afraid to experiment.

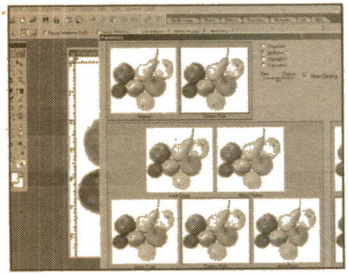
10 GET SOME PERSPECTIVE



This is the most easily understood section of the 'Transform' tools. With the 'Perspective' tool selected, you can give the impression of distance in your image. It's best not to over-use this tool when you're working with smaller photos destined for the Web.

FIXING COLOURS IN PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS

A QUICK SPLASH OF COLOUR AND CLARITY ENHANCEMENT CAN QUICKLY TURN SO-SO SHOTS INTO ABSOLUTE STUNNERS



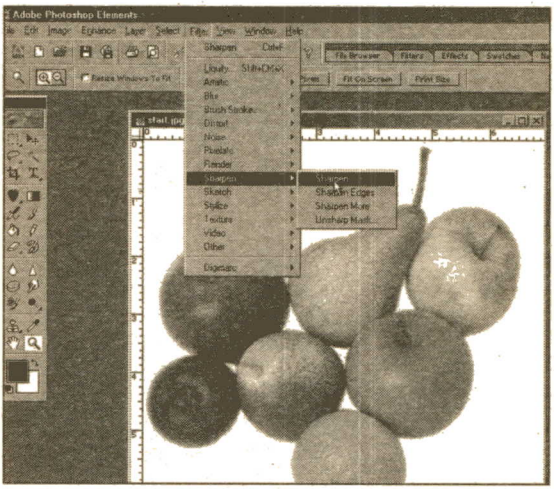
One other area where Photoshop Elements can make an immediate difference to your pictures is in the way colours are represented. It's rare for an amateur snapper to take a picture that perfectly captures the colours and shades of the subject matter. Let's face it, unless you know the detailed workings, the average camera will always either over or under compensate, leading to images which are slightly 'off'.

One of the simplest, yet most effective, changes you can make to your pictures is to adjust the brightness and contrast values. These are similar to the controls you'll find on your TV or monitor and it's amazing how much of a difference this can make to your picture.

When you move to the more advanced techniques, such as adjusting the hue, you'll be making significant differences to the colour make-up of the image and so you should proceed with caution. As always, Photoshop Elements contains a number of 'Auto' options to take most of the legwork away from you.

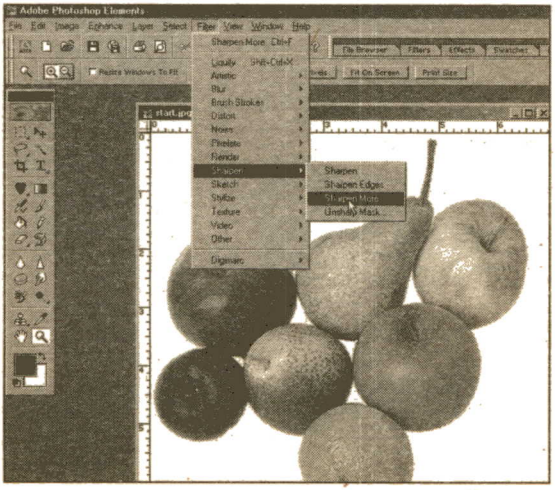
Finding that your all-important photo has come out blurred can be extremely irritating, so we'll also include a quick fix for improving your image sharpness.

01 SHARPEN IT UP



You'll see that our image is slightly blurred – a common problem with digital camera shots taken on the fly. To sharpen things up, go to 'Filter', 'Sharpen', then choose 'Sharpen' from the drop-down menu. This will automatically sharpen up your image.

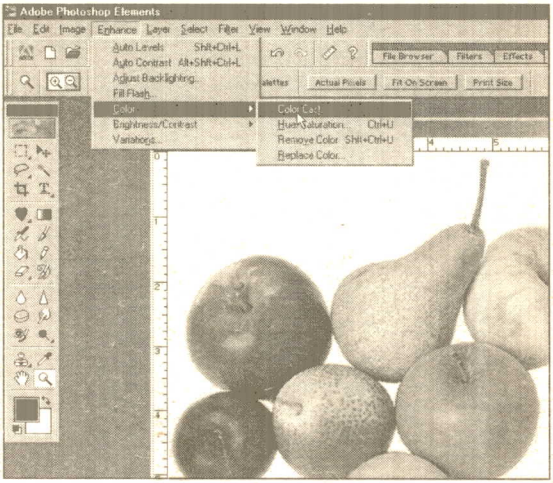
02 SHARPER, SHARPER!



Not enough? This Sharpen tool is often too subtle to fix blurred shots, so there is a more aggressive option. From the same menu, choose 'Sharpen More'. If this still isn't enough, apply 'Sharpen' filters over the top of one another, to build up the effect.

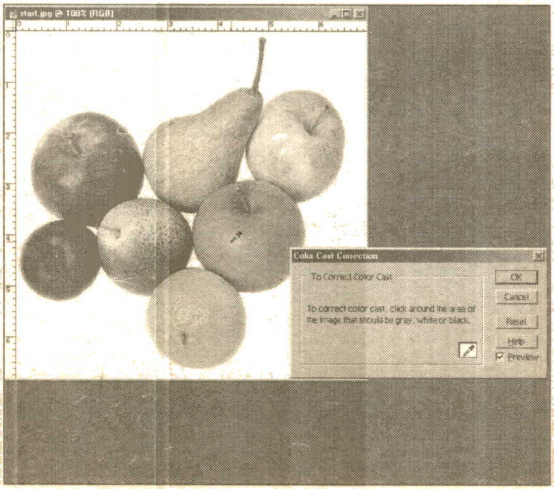
03 COLOR CAST

The 'Color Cast' tool lets you set the grey point of the image, or the colour in the image that should define the new midpoint of the spectrum. To access this, go to 'Enhance', 'Color', then choose 'Color Cast'.

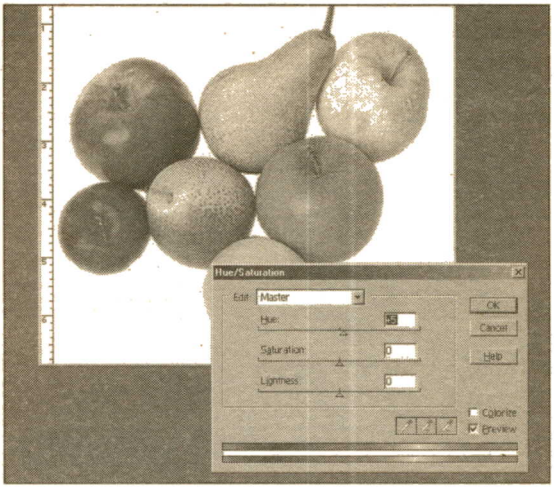


04 CHOOSE A POINT

Now, with the 'Color Cast' box up, click anywhere on your image. You should see that the rest of the image changes colour. This is because you've set a new 'grey point'. Experiment with this until you get an effect that's subtle enough to work on your photograph.



05 ADJUSTING THE HUE



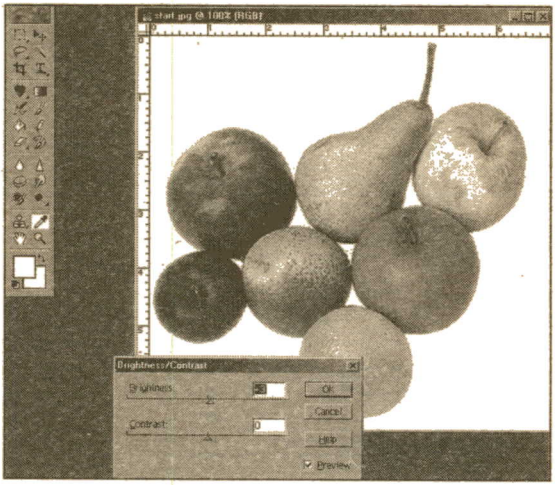
Go to 'Enhance', 'Color', then 'Hue/Saturation'. The 'Hue' defines the colour spectrum that your image uses, as is seen by the palette at the bottom of the window. As you move the slider along, you will see the difference it makes to your image.

06 SATURATE YOUR SHOTS

Below the Hue slider, you can see the 'Saturation' bar. This dictates how much the colour value will affect your image. A zero saturation value means a black and white image, while a high value makes for a damn ugly picture.

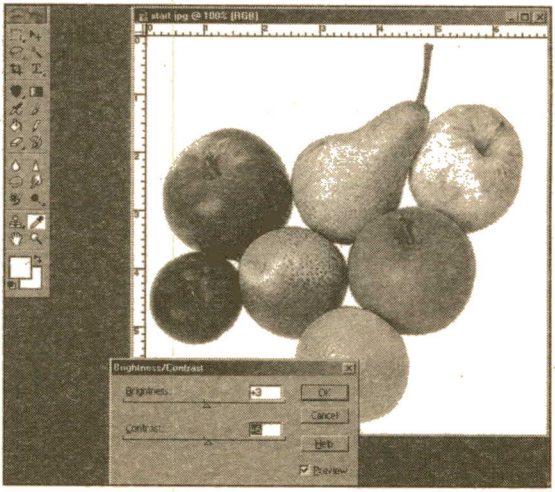
07 BRIGHTNESS AND CONTRAST

Now on to one of the most useful photo enhancement sections. Go to 'Enhance', 'Color' then 'Brightness/Contrast'. The Brightness option at the top is pretty self-explanatory – it controls the light levels of the image. A smaller value will mean that the image will be darker, and vice versa.

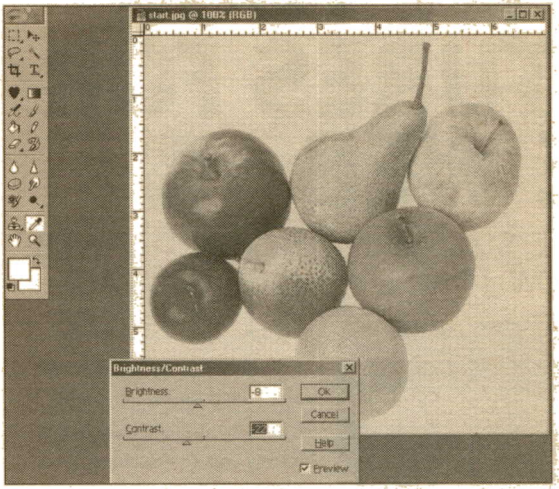


08 COMPARE AND CONTRAST

The Contrast option lets you fix any problems caused by over-compensating on brightness. This adjusts the colour levels of the image, so the higher the value, the stronger the colours. A small contrast value will produce a washed-out effect.

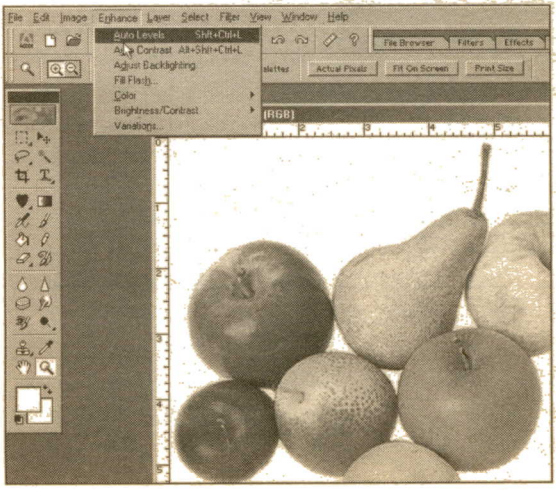


09 THE COMBINED EFFECT



The reason that these two tools appear on the same screen is simple – they compensate each other perfectly. An over-exposed image might make you think something's wrong with brightness, but often it's as much down to the contrast level.

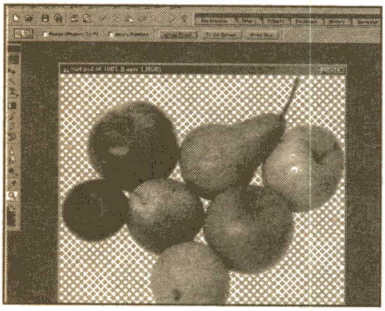
10 AUTO LEVELS



The 'Auto Levels' command will automatically find the lightest and darkest pixels in your image, then change the values of intermediate pixels according to this. This works like an automatic colour adjustment, and can be found under 'Enhance', 'Auto Levels'.

RESIZE YOUR PICTURES FOR THE WEB

SMALL FILE SIZES ARE VITAL ON THE WEB. HERE'S HOW TO KEEP THINGS COMPACT

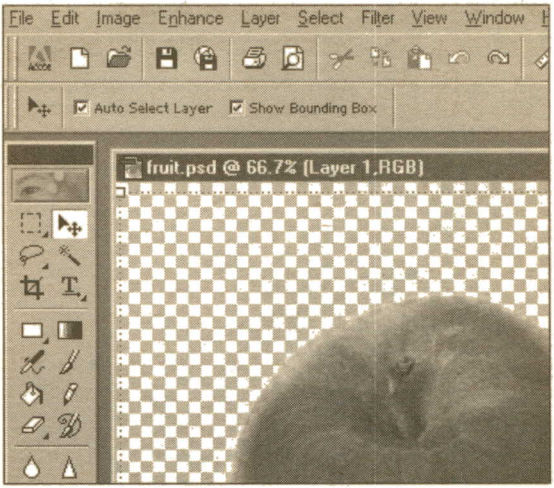


Correcting and altering your images with Photoshop Elements is a great way of fixing pictures, and turning badly exposed calamities into reasonable quality photos. If you're going to use these pictures for the Web, though, there are various rules and conventions you'll have to get to grips with.

For a start, the image you're currently messing around with is probably far too large for the Web. Although you'd never notice it while using your PC, if you saved the current image as a JPEG, it would probably end up around 500Kb. This will take the average modem around three minutes to download. It's a rare thing to find someone who will wait this long for a picture to show in their Web browser.

Consequently, we have to start cutting down on the size of the final file. This is done in two distinct ways. On the following five pages, we'll show you how to optimise your image for a smaller file size using the built-in wizard. First, though, we have to perform a few manual tasks to cut down the image size. If you consider that many people still only use a resolution of 800x600, opting for anything larger than this won't do you any good, so a lot of what we're doing is common sense rather than anything really complex.

01 GET A DIFFERENT VIEW



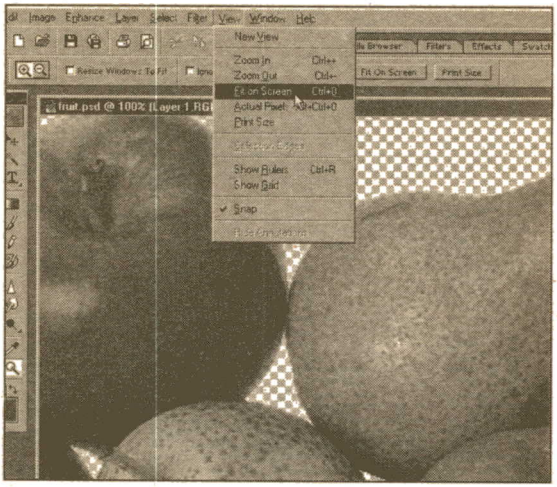
We're trying to cut down the image to reduce file size and make it viewable in Web browsers, so here's a quick tip. Take a look at the Zoom level of the picture you're currently working with. Do this by looking at the figure to the top-left of the window.

02 100% ZOOM

The chances are that, to fit the screen, the picture is being displayed at around 70%. To see it at full size, click on the 'Zoom' tool in the main toolbar and zoom in to 100%. It's easy to see that this picture is far too large for displaying in a browser window.

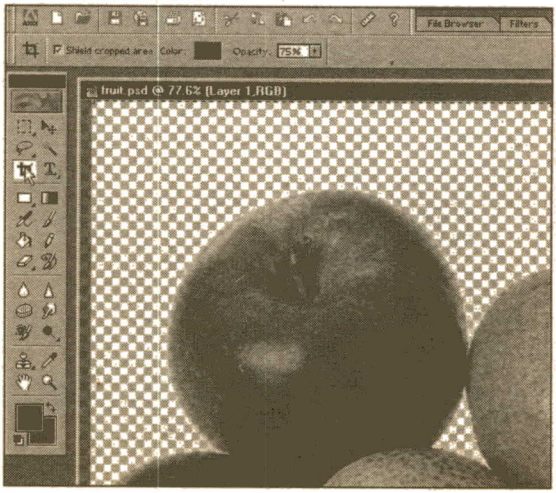
03 ACTUAL SIZE

Alternatively, go to 'View' then 'Actual Pixels' to display your image at 100%. Either way, we have to reduce the size of the image in some way. From the same menu, choose 'Fit on Screen' to see the whole of the image on-screen.

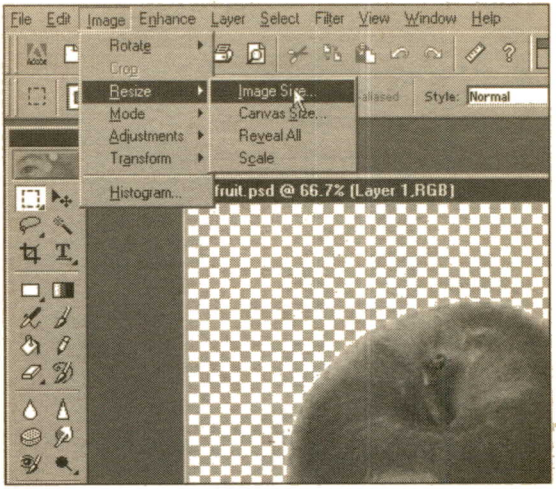


04 CROPPING REMINDER

Although we've dealt with this before, it's worth checking that you've cropped your image properly. This is, after all, a good way of reducing the size of the image, as you're getting rid of unnecessary chunks of the picture. Once you're satisfied with this, it's time to start getting more technical.

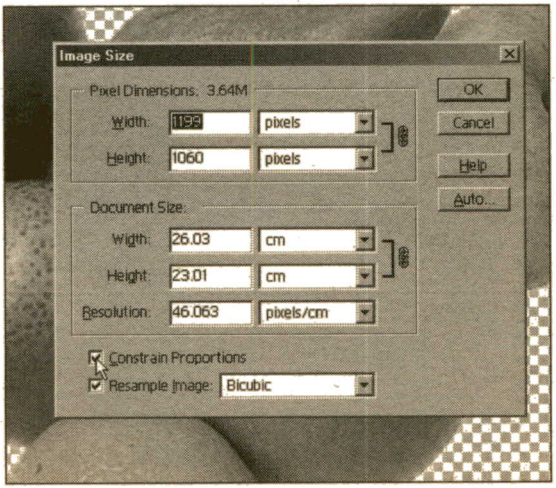


05 IMAGE SIZE



Most of the action now takes place in the 'Image Resize' dialog box, which contains the dimensions and resolution of your image. Access this by going to 'Image', 'Resize' and choosing 'Image Size'.

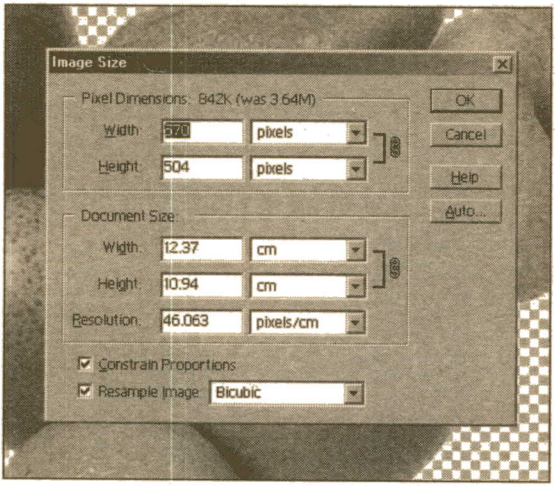
06 KEEP THINGS IN PROPORTION



As you can see, the 'Image Size' box contains a number of figures relating to your image. For the time being, the most important thing is to make sure that 'Constrain Proportions' is ticked. This way, the length and width of the image will always be linked.

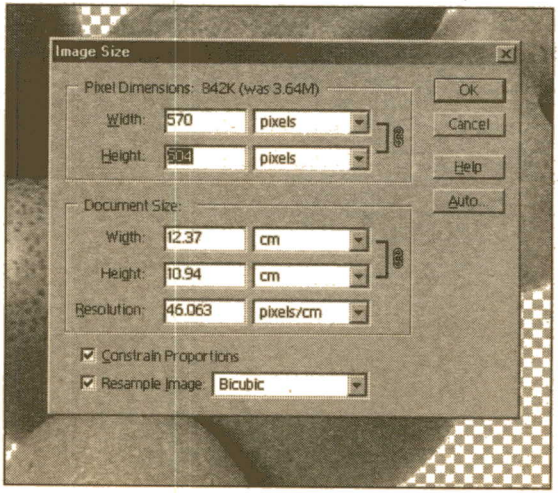
07 WIDTH AND HEIGHT

Our image has dimensions of 1199x1060, which won't be displayed very well on a 800x600 monitor. Therefore, we need to change the image to fit, so alter the width number to between 550 and 600 pixels.

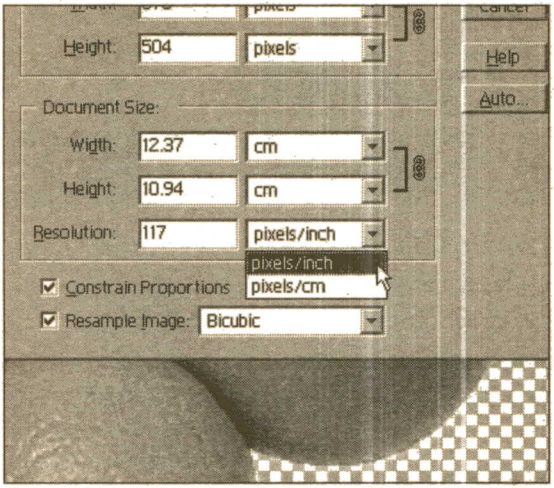


08 CHANGE HEIGHT

You'll notice that the 'Height' value changes as you change the 'Width' number. This is down to the 'Constrain Proportions' settings. Make sure this number doesn't go over 520 pixels, or many people won't be able to view it properly.

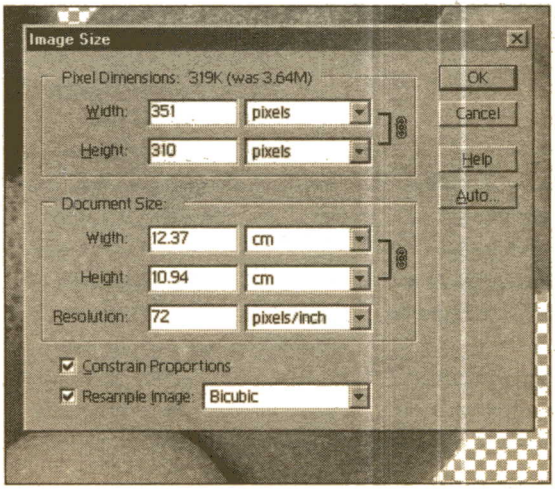


09 A NEW RESOLUTION



Alternatively, you can change the size of your image by altering the resolution. This involves the number of pixels crammed into either an inch or centimetre, and makes a big difference to the image. Most people work with pixels/inch, so change to this.

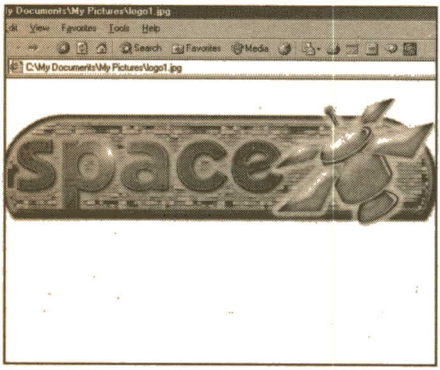
10 AFTER THE RESOLUTION



The standard resolution for a Web image is 72 pixels per inch. If you change to this setting, you'll notice that the Width and Height settings reduce at the same time. Because everything is linked, it's worth deciding on one method or the other.

MAKE STYLISH LOGOS AND PAGE FURNITURE

FOLLOW OUR DETAILED GUIDE TO CREATING TEXT EFFECTS, LOGOS AND NAVIGATION DEVICES WITH PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS

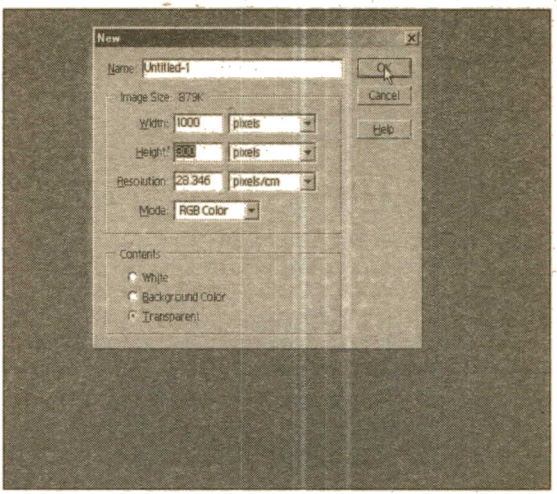


The experts would have you believe that innovative and impressive graphics are out of reach for the layman, but you'd be surprised at how far a little effort will go if you have the right software.

Photoshop Elements 1.0 is perfect if you want to start generating your own logos and page elements. As we've seen, it has nearly all the features of Photoshop proper, for a fraction of the price. In addition, the interface has been subtly altered to make achieving results easier than ever before.

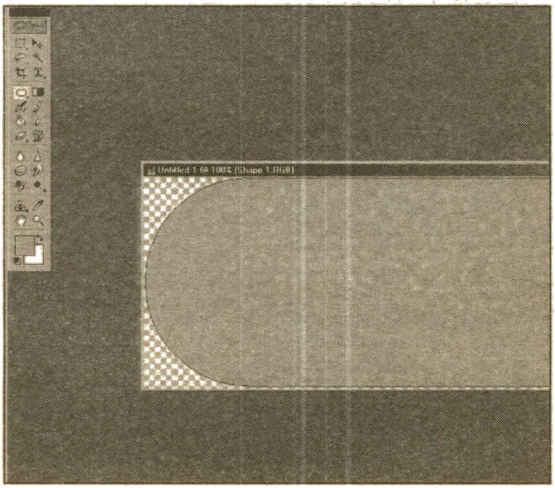
In this project, we're going to create a stunning site logo from scratch. The best thing is, you don't need any extra software to create this fantastic effect. Everything we do is achieved with built-in filters and styles – even the graphic is a letter typed in Dingbat font. You don't even need any expert knowledge of graphics creation – just a basic understanding of building an image up using layers. After this, we'll move into the photo manipulation functions of Photoshop Elements, which again, are both powerful and easy to use.

01 A NEW IMAGE



Before you start anything else, start a new project. Go to 'File', 'New' in the main menu, to bring up this screen. Change the dimension measurements from centimetres to pixels, and then enter 1000x300 in the 'Width' and 'Height' boxes.

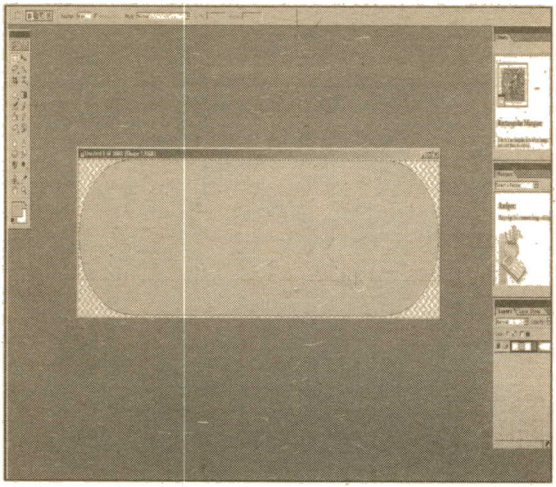
02 THE TOOL FOR THE JOB



Click on the 'Rectangle' tool in the main toolbar and choose 'Rounded Rectangle' from the list. Change the radius to '1000' at the top of the screen for a more curved look. Draw a rectangle from the top-left to the bottom-right.

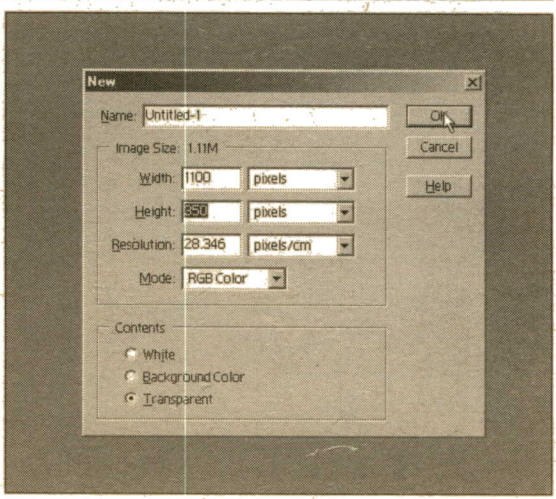
03 A SIMPLE CROP

Right-click on the only layer in the 'Layer' list and choose 'Simplify layer'. Next, choose the 'Marquee' tool from the toolbar, and draw a rectangle from the top to a third of the way up the shape. Press 'CTRL' and 'C' to copy this section.

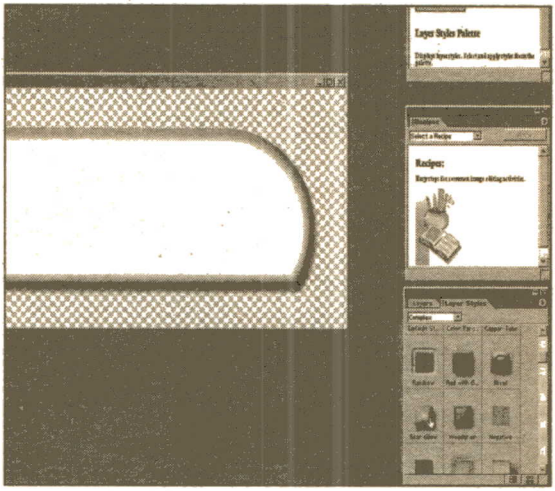


04 A NEW IMAGE

Close the first image down, then start a new one. The resolution will automatically be set to the exact size of the section you've just copied – but we want to expand on this to allow for shadows and glows, so up each figure by about 100 pixels.

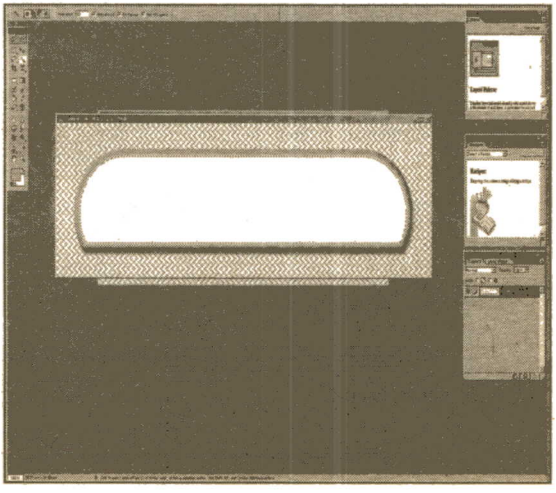


05 PASTE IT IN



Now, press 'CTRL' and 'V' to paste the shape into the new workspace. You'll see it's a bland colour at the moment, so change it. Click on the 'Layer styles' tab in the Layer palette, then go to the 'Complex' option, then 'Star glow'.

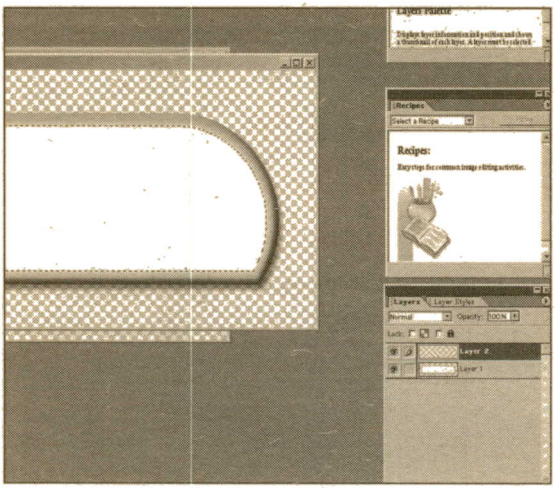
06 A KIND OF MAGIC



Right-click the layer in the palette and choose 'Simplify layer'. Now select the 'Magic wand' tool from the toolbar, making sure 'Use all layers' is ticked at the top of the screen. Click inside the shape, for everything in the blue frame to be selected.

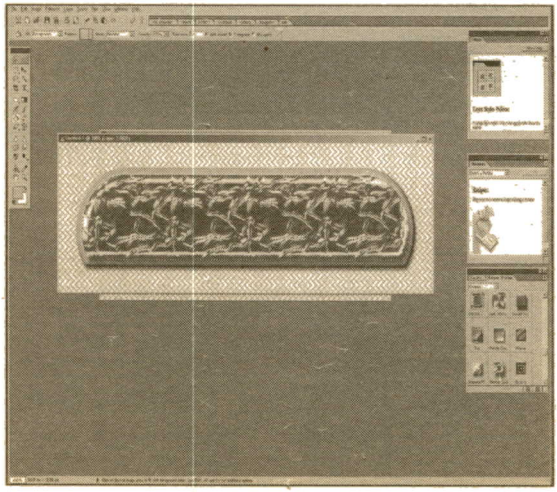
07 ANOTHER LAYER

Click the arrow icon at the top-right of the Layer list, then choose 'New layer'. You'll notice the same area is still selected, even though we're working on a different layer. This is perfect for adding effects within effects.

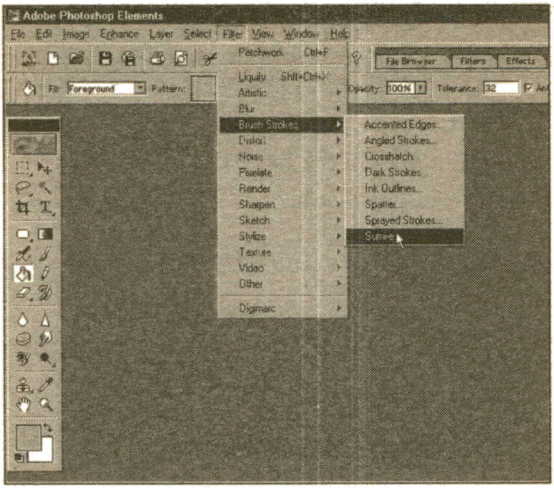


08 ANOTHER STYLE

Select the 'Fill' tool, then fill the selection any colour you like. This is to give Elements an area to hang its styles onto. Now select the 'Molten gold' option from the 'Complex Layer' style. This serves as a good basis for your icon.

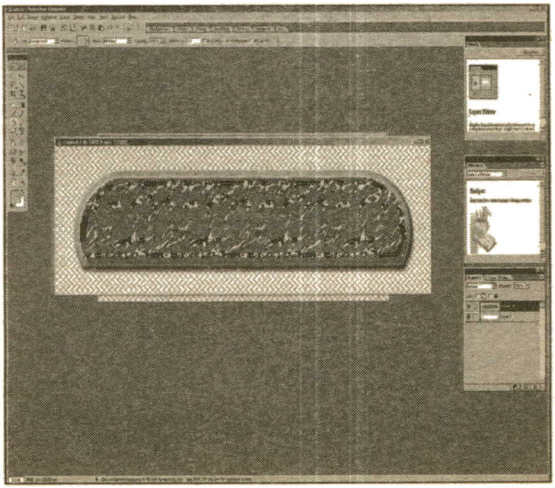


09 THE FIRST EFFECT



Now it's time to start adding effects. You'll see the first one cropping up a lot in this tutorial. Go to 'Filters', 'Brush Strokes', then 'Sumi-e'. This radically changes the look of the image – but we've only just begun.

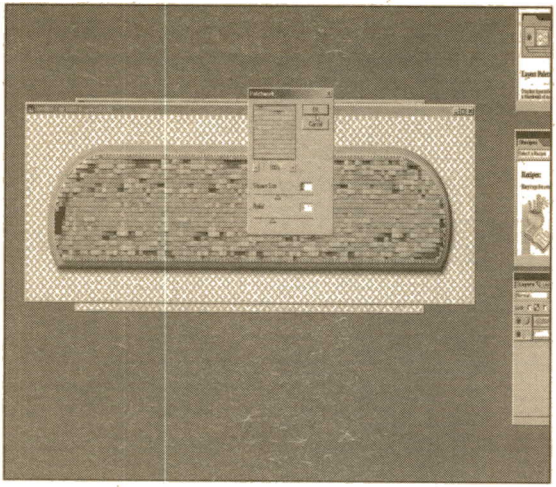
10 PILE THEM ON



Now it's time to start building up the effects. The idea is to build many on top of one another for a better look. So, first up, go to 'Artistic', 'Neon Glow'. Then pick 'Brush strokes', 'Accented edges', and then finally select 'Artistic', 'Watercolour'.

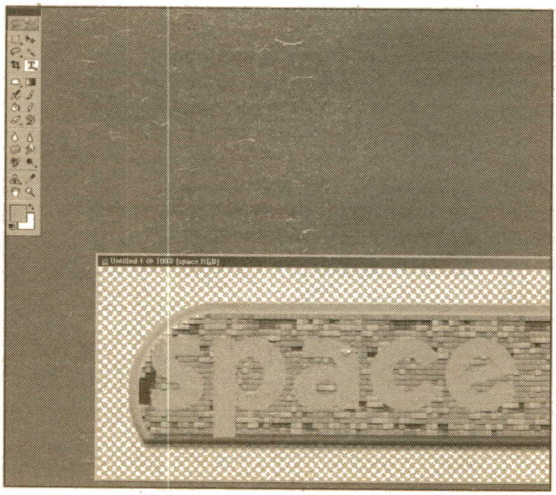
11 THE PATCHWORK LOOK

You'll notice that your logo still looks nothing like ours. Go to 'Filter', 'Texture', then choose 'Patchwork'. You can experiment with the settings, but we think the default numbers do just fine. Press 'OK' to see the effect.

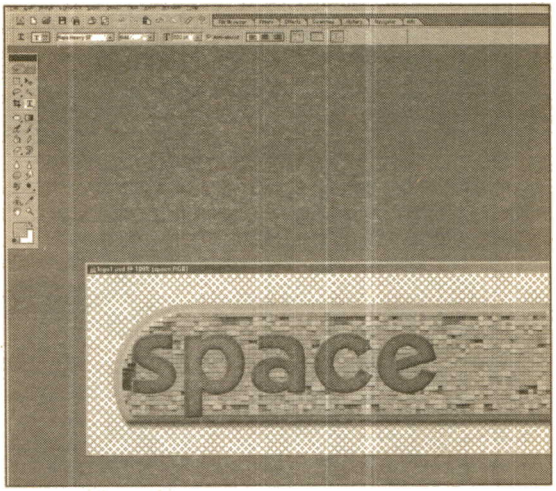


12 THE LOGO TEXT

Now for the text. Click the 'Text' tool, then enter your logo text. Select all of it by dragging the mouse over it, then change the size to something like 220 point. Select a suitable font – we've chosen 'Napa Heavy SF'.



13 A LAYER STYLE



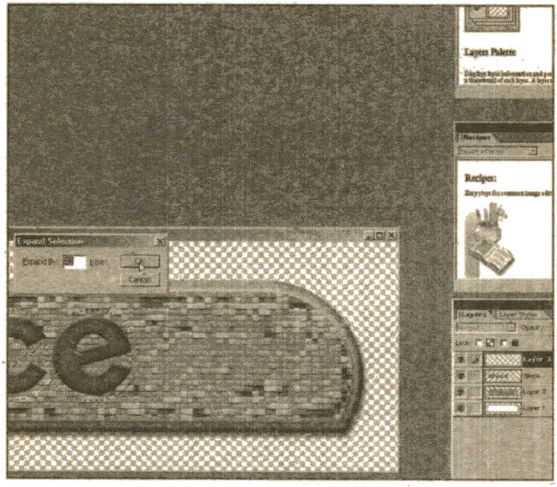
Simplify this new 'space' layer, then go into the 'Layer Styles' box, and choose 'Blue glass' from the 'Glass buttons' section. Next, go to the 'Bevels' section, and choose a 'Simple inner' to give the text more feel.

14 SPATIAL EFFECTS

Next up, we want to create a green halo behind the text. To make it all easier, let's do this on a new layer. First up, press 'CTRL' as you press the text layer in the Layer list.

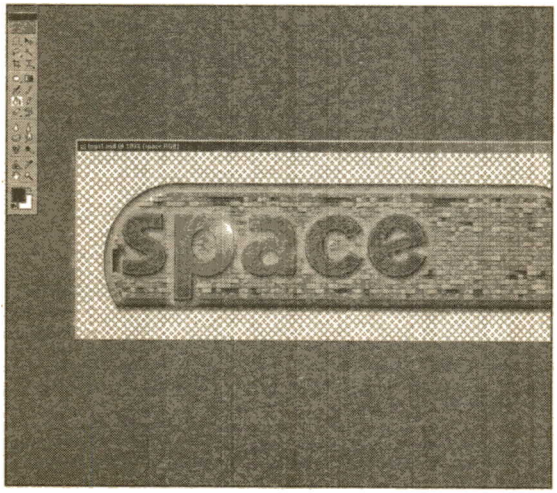
15 EXPAND THE SELECTION

This selects only the active area in the layer. Create another layer – this lets you keep your selected area. Go to 'Select', 'Modify', then 'Expand', and choose '10'. This will 'grow' the selection by 10 pixels, which is perfect for a background halo.

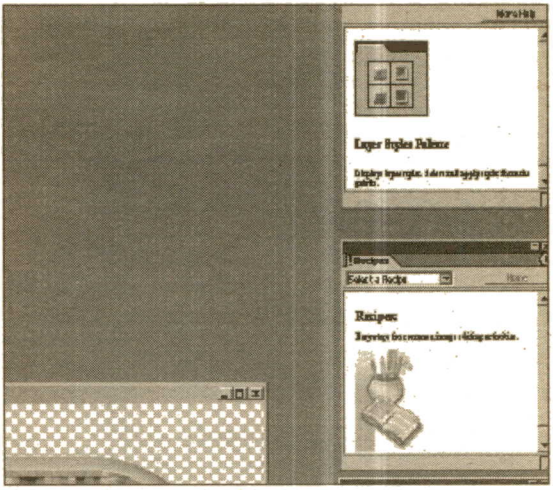


16 THE HALO

Before we fill the halo in, go to 'Select', then 'Feather' by five pixels. Click on the 'Fill' tool, and then on the 'Fill colour' to select one of your own. We've gone for light blue. Now fill in the space, and drag the 'space' layer above this in the layer list.

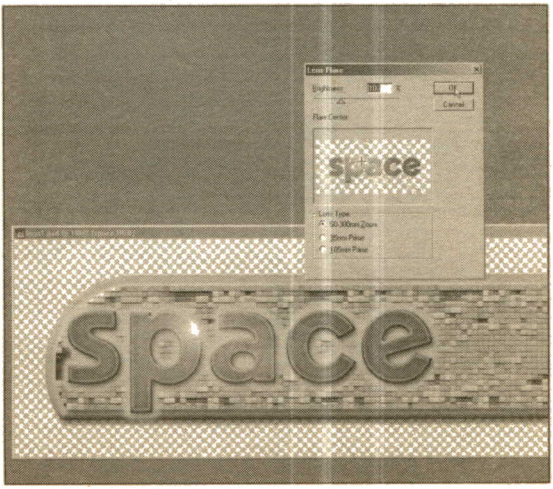


17 FURTHER TEXT STYLING



To give your text a more individual and classy look, apply the following Layer styles. From 'Inner glows', choose the very last 'Blue ghost' style. In 'Drop shadows', apply a 'Soft edge', then choose 'Low' from the 'Inner shadow' box.

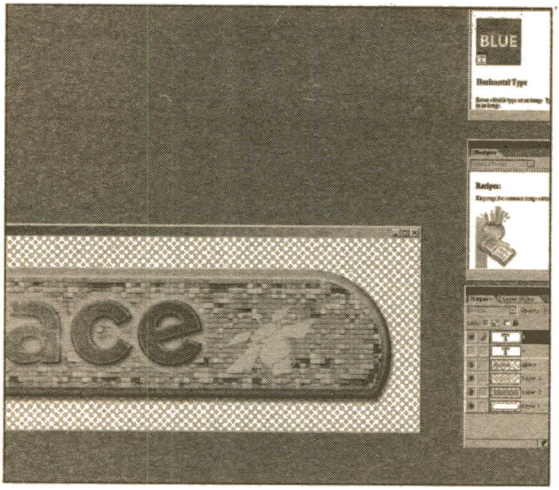
18 LENS FLARE



Now for one little effect that will turn your graphic into a winner. Go to 'Filter', 'Render', then 'Lens flare'. In the screen that appears, place your flare anywhere within your text – we found it looked best between the 'p' and 'a'.

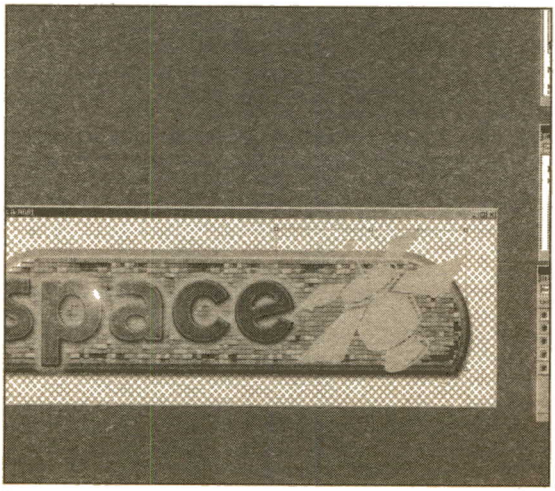
19 ADD A GRAPHIC

Creating your own professional-looking logo graphic is remarkably easy. All you need to do is browse through a Dingbat font until you find a picture that fits. We've gone for a satellite in 'Webdings', which is the equivalent of 'k'.

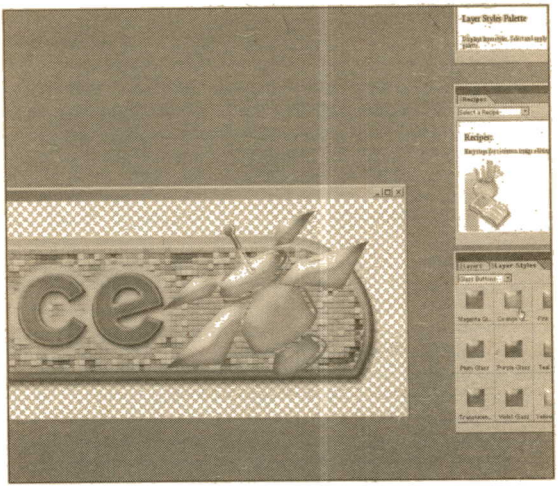


20 STYLE IT UP: PART 1

Select the 'text' you've just created, and make it as large as you can possibly get it within the overall logo. If you can't manage this with font sizes, simply drag on the handles to make the image the size you want.

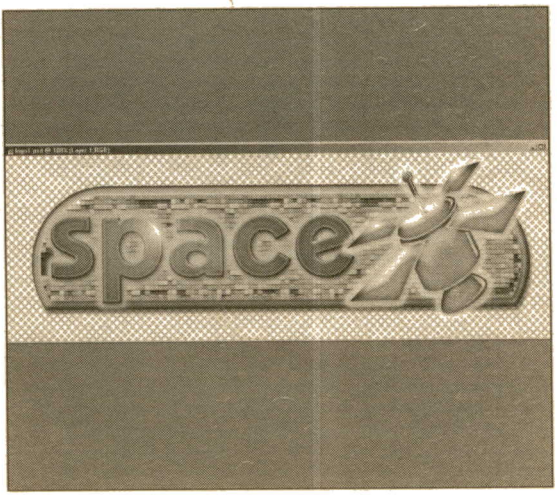


21 STYLE IT UP: PART 2



To instantly make your graphic look better, go into 'Layer styles', then choose 'Orange glow' from the 'Glass buttons' menu. Having done this, apply the following: 'low drop shadow', 'low inner shadow' and 'heavy noisy outer glow'.

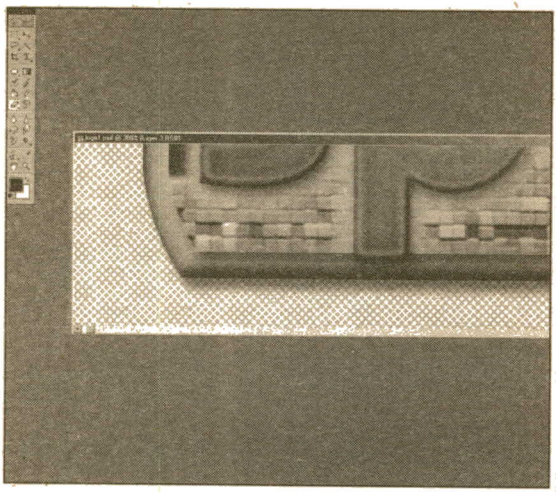
22 THE FINISHING TOUCHES



Now for a couple of changes that make a huge difference. Select the first layer and choose 'Low' from the 'Inner shadow' section in 'Layer Styles'. This gives the main background a darker look.

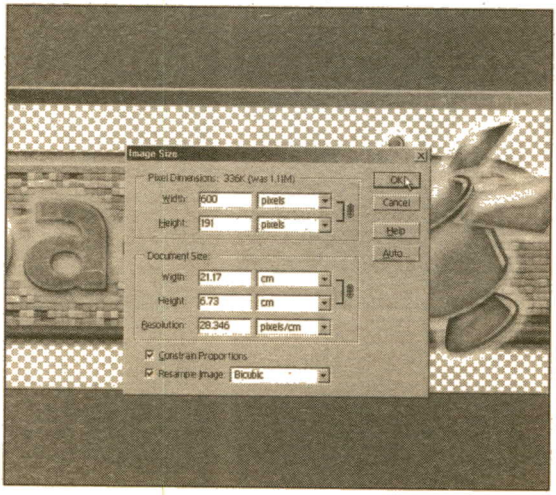
23 REMOVE THE FRAYED EDGES

Zoom in to 300% using the 'Zoom' tool, then select 'layer three'. You'll see that some of the 'halo' has bled onto the frame, so click on the 'Eraser' tool and rub this out. Because we're only working in the 'halo' layer, nothing else will be removed.

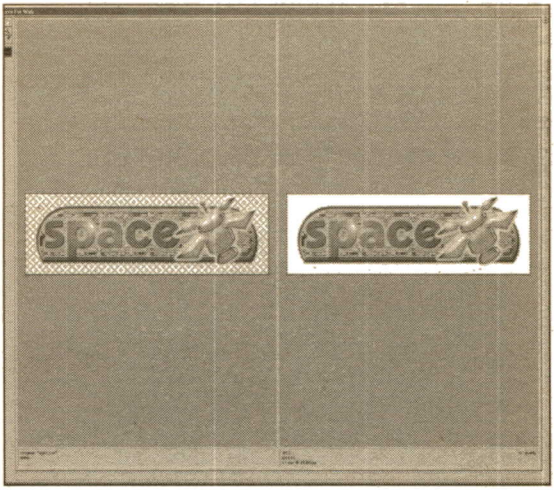


24 RESIZE THE IMAGE

A resolution of 1100x350 pixels is great for editing, but few people have the monitor or bandwidth to cope with this. To change resolution, go to 'Image', 'Resize' then 'Image size'. Change the width to 600, and the height will change.

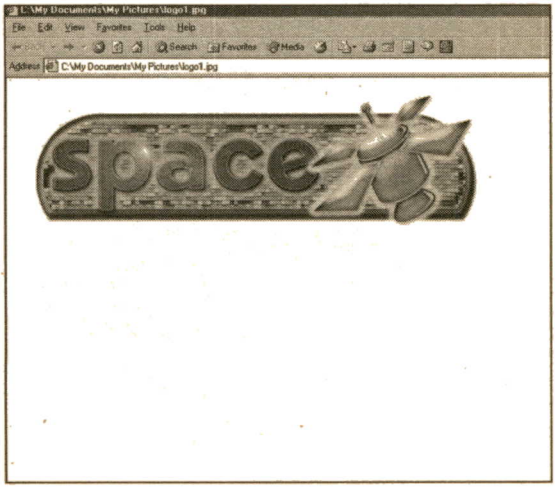


25 SAVE FOR THE WEB



Now export the image as a JPEG. Go to 'File' then 'Save for the Web' to bring up the optimisation screen. Choose 'JPEG' in the drop-down list, then set the quality to either 'medium' or 'high'. Click on 'OK' and then save to disk.

26 THE LOGO IN ACTION


C:\My Documents\My Pictures\logo1.jpg
File Edit View Favorites Tools Help
Search Favorites Media
Address C:\My Documents\My Pictures\logo1.jpg

Now you have an optimised JPEG, ready to be used in any Web page you create. Alternatively, you can just double-click on the JPEG to open it up in Internet Explorer, then sit back and view the fruits of your handiwork.

PHOTOSHOP CHAPTER TWO

PHOTOSHOP 6.0

44 PHOTOSHOP 6.0 POWER FEATURES

Get acquainted with the features that separate Photoshop from Photoshop Elements with this guide to advanced image processing and management

54 GETTING TO GRIPS WITH LAYERS

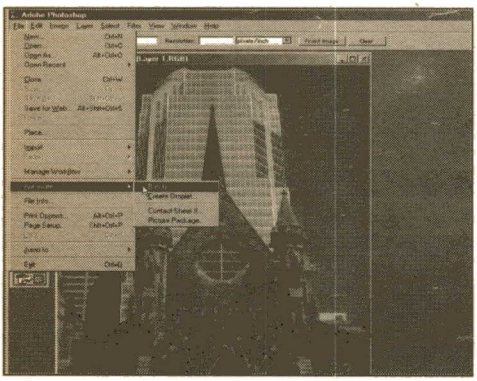
Master layers and you'll be well on the way to mastering Photoshop itself. Here we show you how to use layers to create a photo composition for your Web site

68 CREATE ACTIVE BUTTON ELEMENTS

Discover the power and flexibility provided by Photoshop and how it allows dynamic content to be generated with this guide to creating active button elements for your Web pages

PHOTOSHOP 6.0 POWER FEATURES

GET YOURSELF ACQUAINTED WITH THE ADVANCED FEATURES OF PHOTOSHOP 6.0

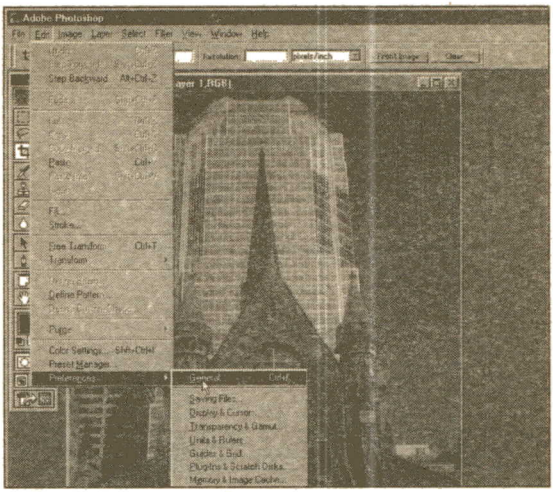


After spending some time exploring the Photoshop 6.0 interface, you need to make sure that you're using the program effectively. This is, after all, one of the most effective and comprehensive image editors available on the market, and the range of 'power tools' available can quickly become bewildering.

The aim of the following pages is to set you on the path towards making Photoshop work more efficiently for you. Did you know, for example, that you can set how much RAM Photoshop is assigned by your PC every time it is opened? If you're suffering from an annoying lag at the moment, this option can be a godsend.

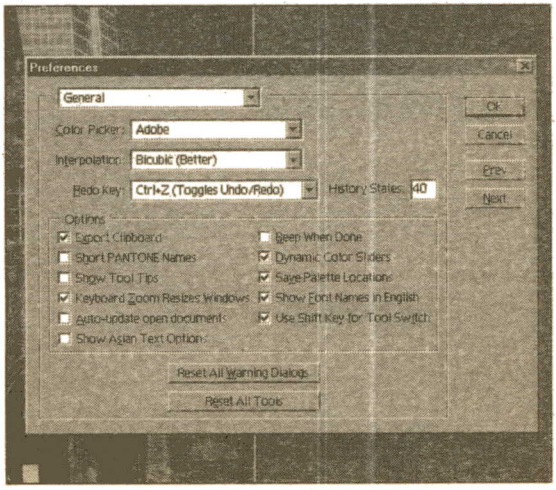
By taking a few minutes to get to know some of the more advanced functions of the program, you can make sure that you're using the program as Adobe intended. The best thing about the options we're going to alter is that you'll only have to make the changes once – after this, you can sit back, relax, and watch as Photoshop 6.0 moves more quickly and powerfully than ever before.

01 WHAT ARE YOUR PREFERENCES?



The key to many of the power features is the 'Preferences' section. You can find this option by going to 'Edit', 'Preferences', then choosing 'General Preferences'. This will present you with all the basic Preferences.

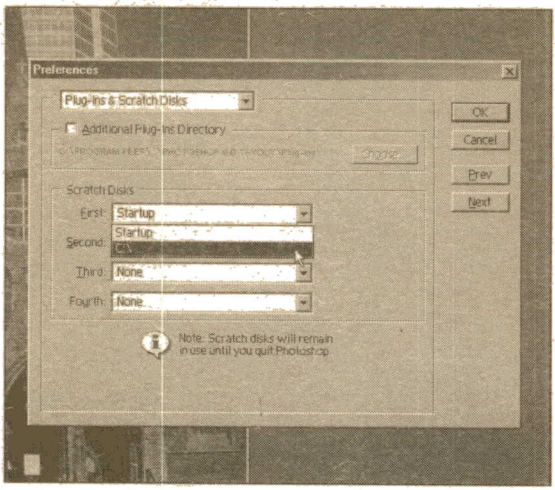
02 GENERAL PREFERENCES



In this first Preferences section, there are many interesting options. If your PC can handle it, change the 'History' value to '40' instead of '20'. We've also ticked the 'Keyboard Zoom Resizes Windows', and unticked the 'Show Tool Tips' box.

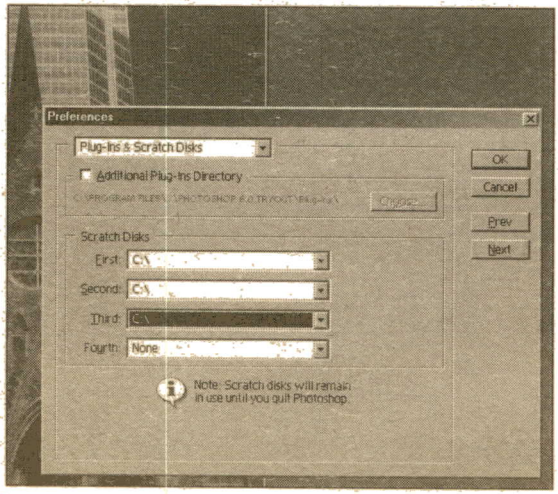
03 THE SCRATCH DISK

The Scratch Disk is the temporary folder that Photoshop writes to between saves to speed up performance. Unfortunately, the default setting tends to result in slightly slower performance, so change the first options box to the largest disk partition you have on your PC.

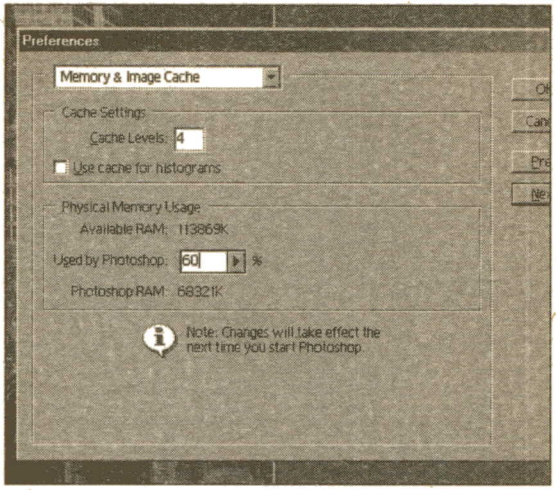


04 MORE SCRATCH DISKS

Now is the time that you'll really appreciate having partitioned your hard drive. You can set each of the Scratch Disks to work with a different drive. This improves the speed of Photoshop, as you won't be waiting so long for changes to be made to pictures.

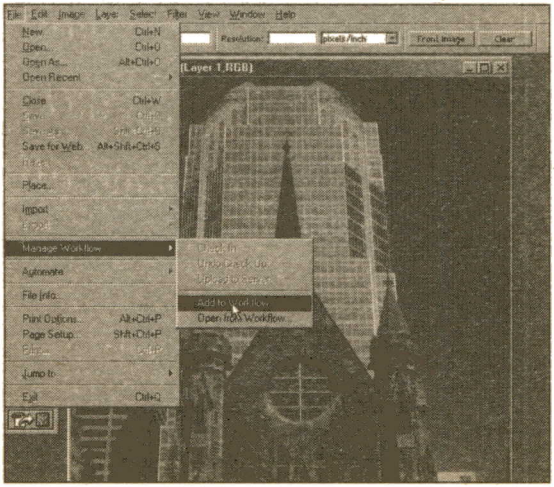


05 MEMORY USAGE



One way to really boost the performance of Photoshop is to up the levels of RAM used by the program. The standard figure is around 50% of all available RAM – the more RAM you have, the less important this becomes. If you're on 64Mb, we'd suggest trying for a figure around 40-45Mb.

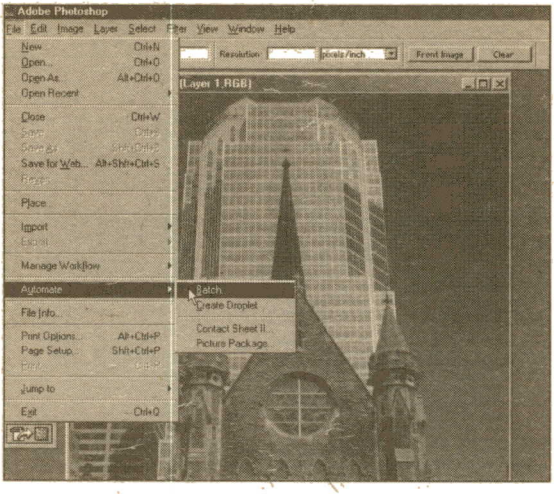
06 WORKFLOW MANAGEMENT



If there are a few of you working on the same image project, Photoshop has a handy system to ensure only one person can work on the image at a time. Known as 'Workflow', this involves saving reports of your work to the Web. Access this by going to 'File' then 'Manage Workflow'.

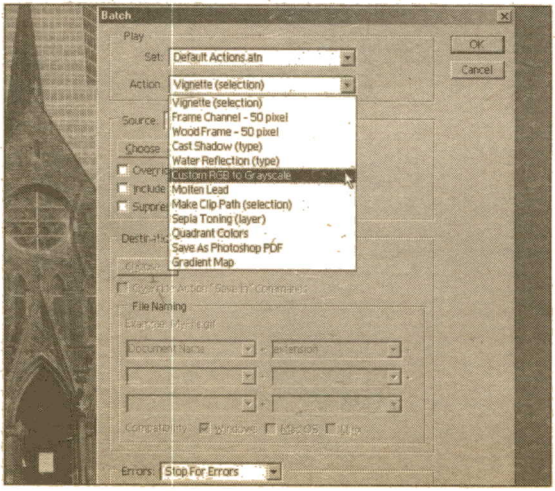
07 BATCH CONVERSIONS

Applying changes to a large collection of images can prove incredibly tiresome if you have to keep repeating the same steps. Thankfully, Photoshop 6.0 has a feature to relieve this stress. The 'Batch Conversion' option can be found under 'File', 'Automate' then 'Batch'.

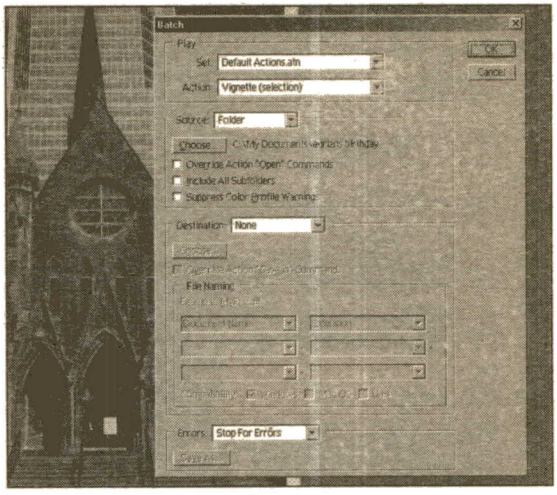


08 BATCH SETTINGS

By default, Photoshop 6.0 has a good few 'Actions' stored within the standard 'Set'. Each of the actions are pretty specific, and you can eventually create your own sets. For the time being, however, it's worth experimenting with the default actions, so choose one from the list.

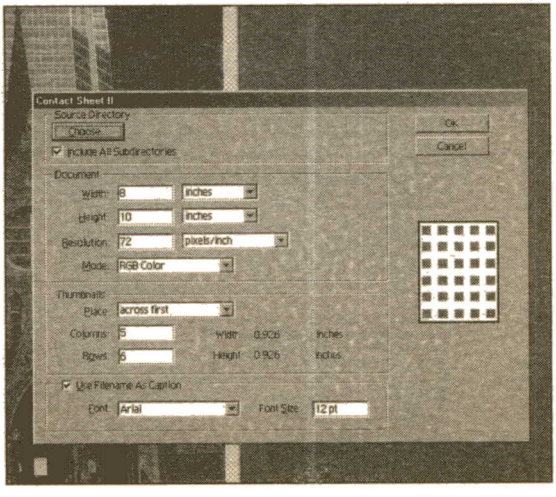


09 CHOOSE A FOLDER



After choosing which action to perform, all that's left to do is set the folder where the images to be changed are. Click on 'Choose' to do this. If you leave the 'Destination' section at 'None', the altered image will replace the original ones in the same folder.

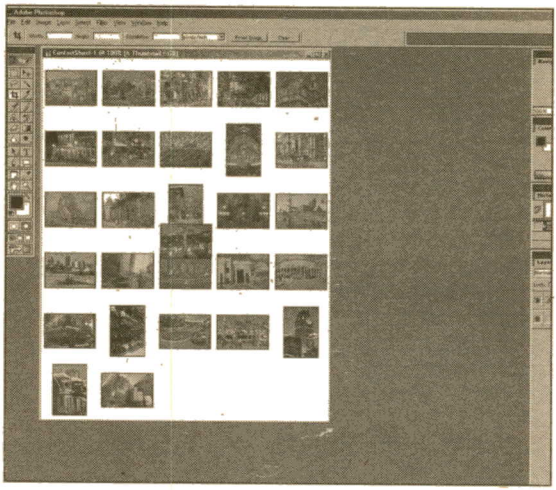
10 A CONTACT SHEET



If you have loads of images stored on your PC and wish to show them off to someone without Web access, the 'Contact Sheet' option is ideal. This gives you a sheet filled with thumbs from a particular folder, and is found under 'File', 'Automate' then 'Contact Sheet'.

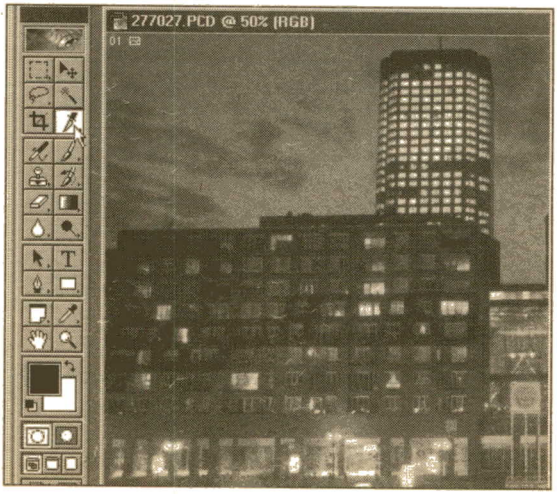
11 THE FINISHED SHEET

Next up, choose the folder which houses the images you'd like to place on your Contact Sheet. You can then adjust the settings to fit your needs – we've removed the caption which would otherwise appear below each image. Click 'OK', then wait as your Contact Sheet is created.

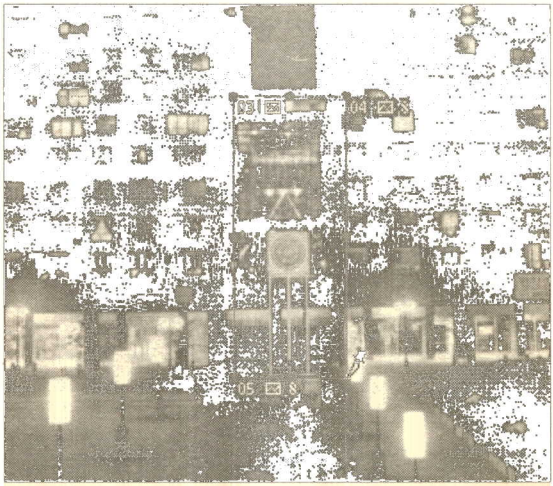


12 IMAGE SLICING

Previously only available on the bundled ImageReady program, you can now perform your image slicing within the Photoshop 6.0 interface. To access this, click the 'Slice' tool in the main toolbar. Make sure you have the standard 'Slice' tool here, and not the 'Select' tool you can also choose.

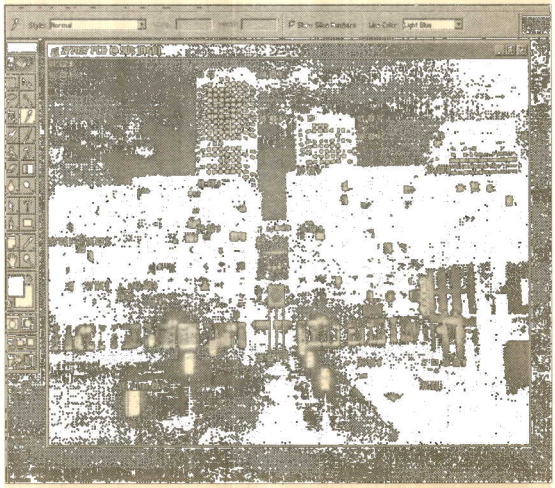


13 DRAWING SLICES



To slice up the image good and proper, you need to draw rectangles over the areas of the picture you'd like to turn into a hotspot. Notice how, when you draw a slice, it is given a number and various other markings to distinguish it from other slices on the screen.

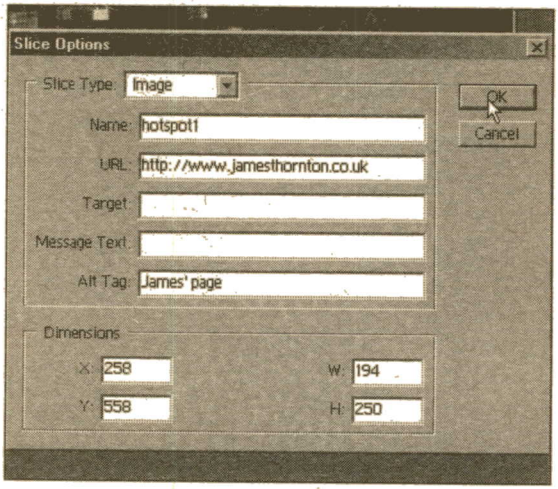
14 THE IMAGE MAP



After making a few more slicing operations, your image will start to look something like this. Once you're happy with your slices, choose the 'Select' tool from the toolbar, then simply double-click on any slice within the image.

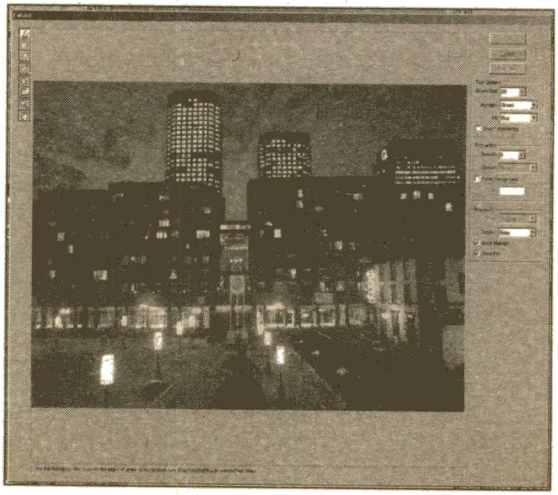
15 LINKING THE SLICES

Enter the URL of the linked hotspot, then include a target (whether the Web page should open in a new window) and some 'Alt' text (the text which appears when a mouse moves over the hotspot). Do this for all the hotspots. Now you're ready to save your imagemap and upload it.

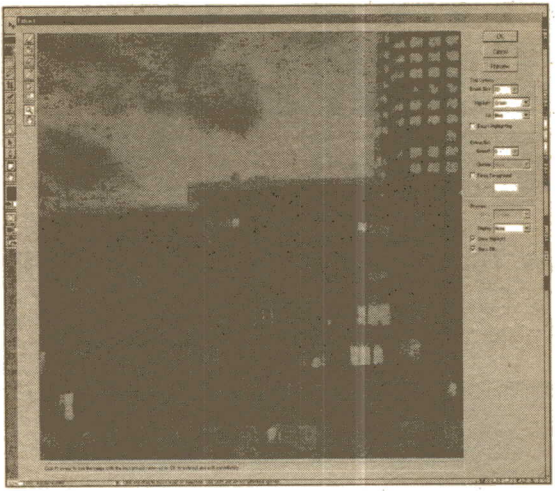


16 EASY EXTRACTING

One of the best features of Photoshop 6.0 is the 'Extract' function. This lets you cut out parts of an image much more easily than if it was done manually. Access the Extract feature by going to 'Image', then 'Extract'. You'll see this screen.



17 THE EXTRACTION



Draw round the edges of the object to cut out, using the marker as shown. Once you've done this, fill the object in using the 'Fill' tool in the special toolbar. To extract this from the image, press on 'OK', and you'll see the cutout image on its own.

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH LAYERS

LEARN HOW TO USE THE POWERFUL LAYER FUNCTIONS TO MAKE A PHOTO COMPOSITION FOR YOUR WEB SITE

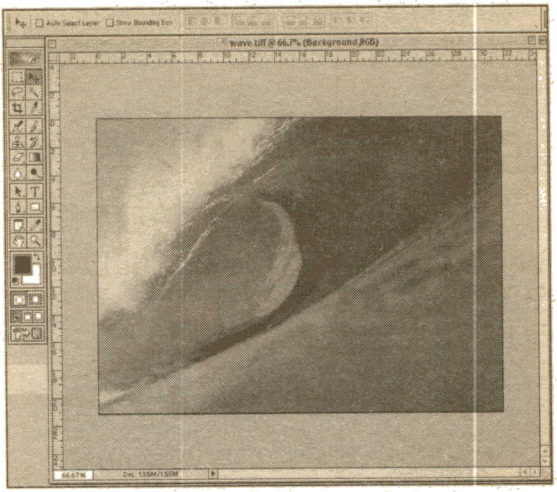
Layers are a key part of Photoshop, and if you want to get anywhere with the program, you're going to have to face them one day. Thankfully, they're quite easy to pick up.

You need to think of layers as the building blocks to every image that you create, so understanding them and the many layer options is an essential part of any Photoshop artist's repertoire. If you copy and paste part of an image, it will appear on a new layer. If you use text, a new layer will be created.

If you've ever used Photoshop Elements, you'll know that you don't need to be an expert to make use of layers, but it's worth remembering that the Layering tools are more powerful and complex in Photoshop 6.0.

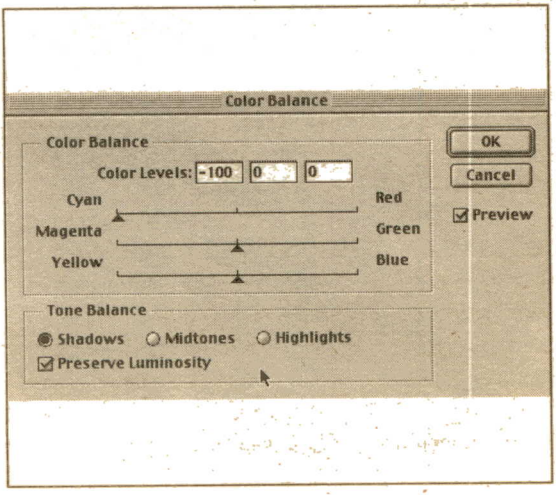
Many digital artists adjust layers to their advantage so that they can create complex images using subtle blends to enhance and build up their illustration work. In this project, we're going to show you how to get creative with layers – from simple blending modes through to using layer masks, clipping groups and adjustment layers. Work through this project to the end and you'll be able to add some creative flourishes to the images destined for your Web site.

01 GETTING STARTED



Once you've started Photoshop, open the file from the cover CD called 'wave.tiff'. When the file opens you will see that it is a black-and-white image, which we are going to use as a base for our composition and then colour up.

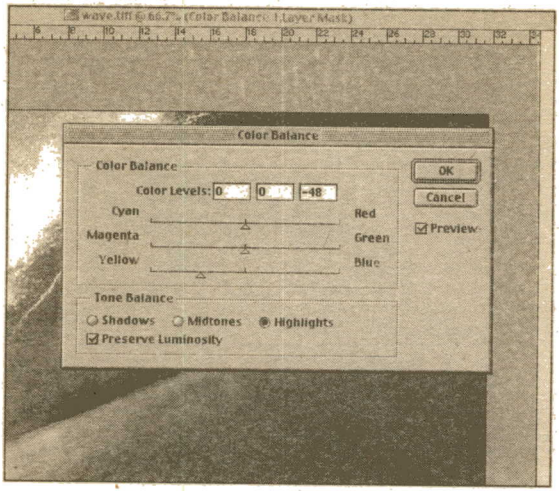
02 FIND ADJUSTMENT LAYER



Go to the 'Layer' menu, choose 'New Adjustment Layer' and select 'Colour Balance'. We are going to add colour to the image that will effect all layers placed below this adjustment layer. The advantage of this is that any changes to colour can just be made to this layer without doing it to each individual layer.

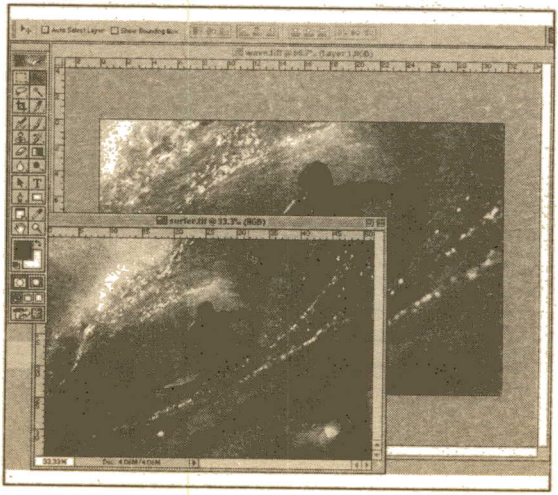
03 A LITTLE COLOUR

In the 'Colour Balance' pop-up window, select 'Shadows' and drag the Cyan slider to –100. Click the 'highlight' slider, drag the yellow slider to –48 and click 'OK'. A new layer has been created in the 'Layers' palette. To make any amendments, just double-click this layer.

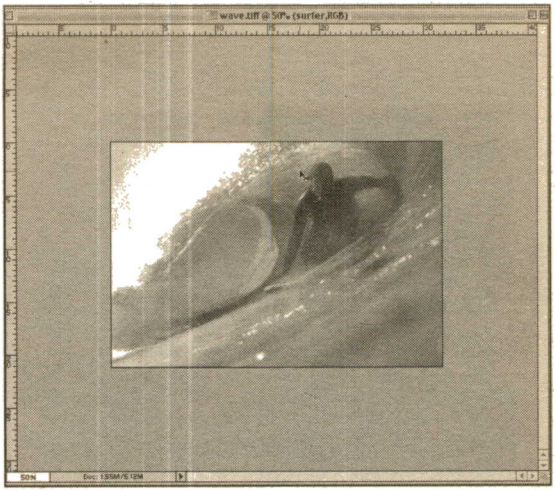


04 FIND THE SURFER

Open 'surfer.tiff' from the CD and drag the surfer onto the wave image. Go to the 'Edit' menu. Select 'Transform', 'Scale'. You will probably need to zoom out slightly ('Ctrl' & '-') to see the corner handles to scale the image. Hold down 'Shift' while dragging the handles in order to constrain the image.

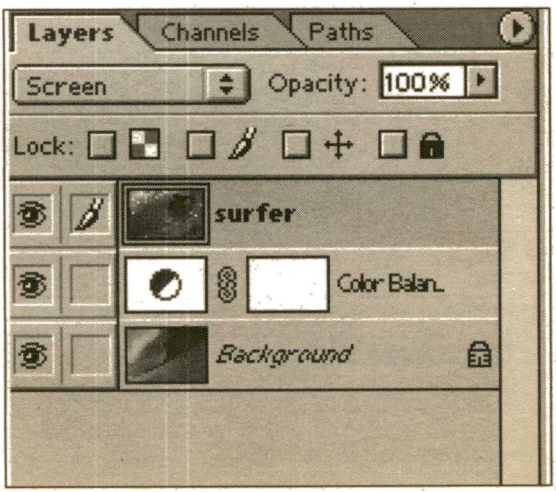


05 GET BLENDING



When you've brought down the image of the surfer slightly, select the 'Blending' mode in the Layer palette and change it to 'screen'. This blends the two layers together with the lighter area of the image below coming through, giving the effect that the surfer image is lighter overall.

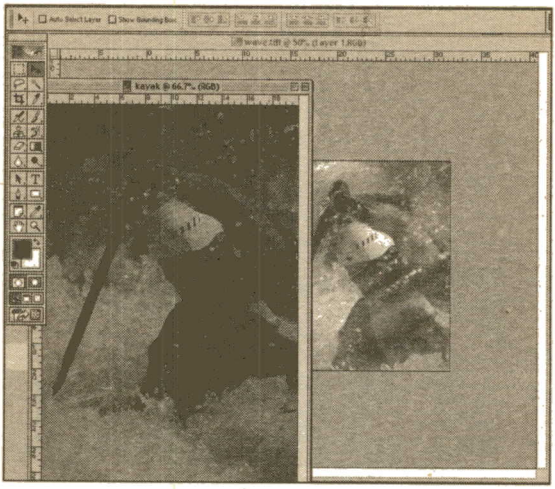
06 LAYER ORDER



The surfer should be positioned as the top layer. The next few images we bring in will go below the 'Colour balance' layer so the colour balance will be applied to it. Select the 'Wave' layer so that when we bring in any other layers, it will be at the top.

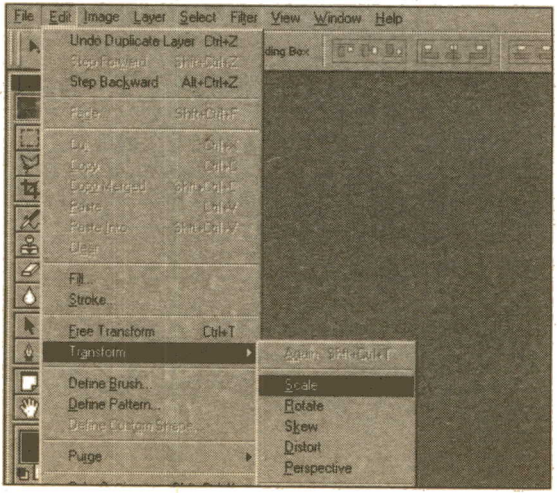
07 ADD THE KAYAK

Open the file named 'Kayak.tiff' from the cover CD-ROM and drag the image onto our wave image. As you will see, because we selected the bottom layer in the wave image, the new layer was positioned just above that active layer, and now becomes the active layer.

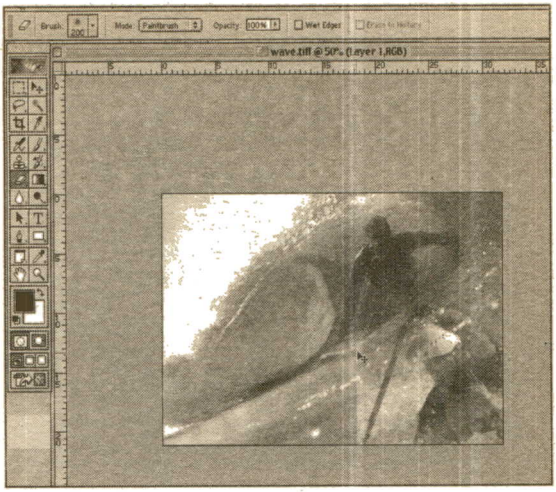


08 GET IT TO SCALE

Go to the 'Edit' menu. Select 'Transform' and 'Scale'. Get the head and shoulders to fill the area below the surfer. Hold down 'Shift' while re-sizing to constrain the proportions of the image as it is being scaled. If you can't see the transform handles, zoom out as before ('Ctrl' & '-').

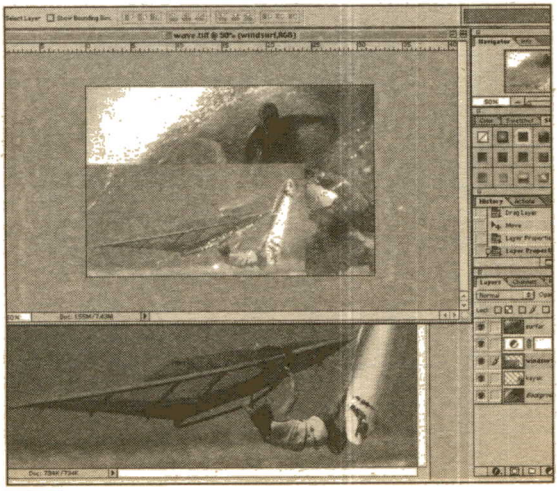


09 ERASE THE EDGES



Select the 'Eraser' tool from the toolbar and pick the brush labelled '200' from the menu. Just click and drag to erase the edges of the kayaker around the top and left-hand edge, so that the sharp edge disappears. Just click under his arm as well, to remove any detail there.

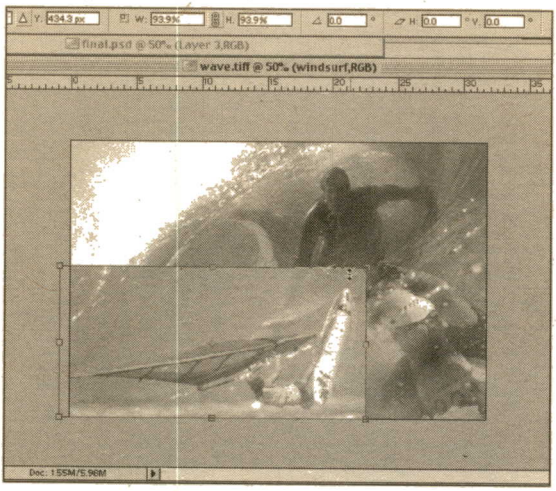
10 ADD THE WINDSURFER



Open the file named 'Windsurf.tiff' and drag it onto the wave image. It should have come in just above the kayak layer, as that was the last one selected. If for some reason it isn't, arrange the order just by clicking and dragging the layer in the 'Layer' palette.

11 RESIZE TIME

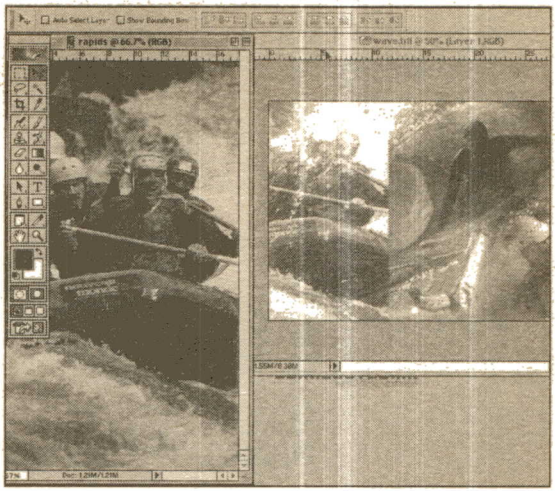
Make sure that the windsurfer is flush to the left-hand edge of the document. It should snap into place, if not, just check whether 'snapping' is turned on under the 'View' menu. Go to the 'Edit' menu and select 'Transform', 'Scale' and bring the size down so the board is just under the surfer.



12 SOFTEN THE IMAGE

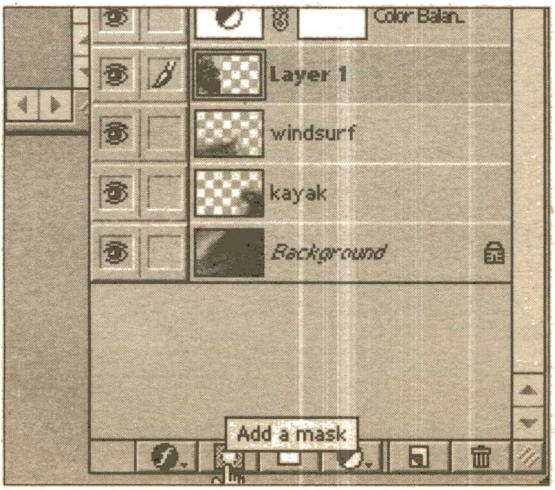
Click the 'Erase' tool again and click and drag around the hard edges of the windsurfer image. The brush should still be the 200 pixel soft edge brush as used before, but if it isn't, just select this brush again from the menu.

13 OPEN AGAIN



Open the image 'rapids.tiff' from the CD-ROM and drag it across on to the main image. There is no need to resize this image – just position the right-hand rapids rider so he is on the left-hand edge of the image, as shown to the left.

14 ADD A MASK



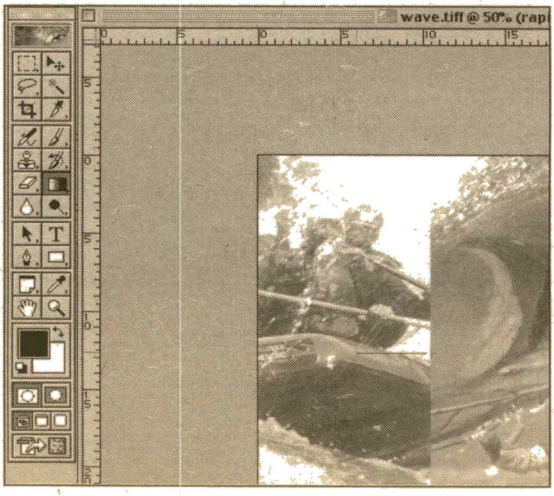
Click the 'Add Layer Mask' icon, found in the 'Layer' palette, as shown to the left. This will add a mask to the layer, which will then cause a smooth blend between this layer and the ones immediately below it. Photoshop always adds the mask to the current layer selected.

15 GRADIENT TOOL

Select the 'Gradient' tool from the toolbar, and then select the 'Foreground to transparent' option. If your foreground and background colour is not black and white, press 'D' on the keyboard, which will reset the colours to a black foreground and a white background.

16 CLICK AND DRAG

With the 'Gradient' tool selected, click on the 'Rapids' layer at the hard edge and drag the cursor towards the left-hand edge of the document. A line should follow which shows the direction of the blend. Release the mouse when you are just over halfway across the visible part of the layer.



17 MASK IN PLACE

Now the mask is in place, we can see that there is too much detail from the very top layer, which interferes with the rest of the image. Select the 'Surfer' layer to amend that layer and reduce the detail.

18 MAKE A SELECTION

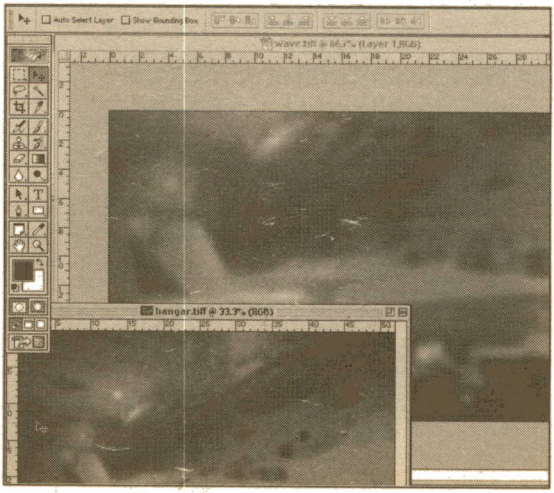
Using the 'Rectangle marquee' tool, select the area around the rapids image on the surfer layer. Once you've done this, go to the 'Filter' menu and select 'Blur', 'Gaussian Blur'. Select the pixels up to around a 20 pixel blur.

19 ADDING TEXT

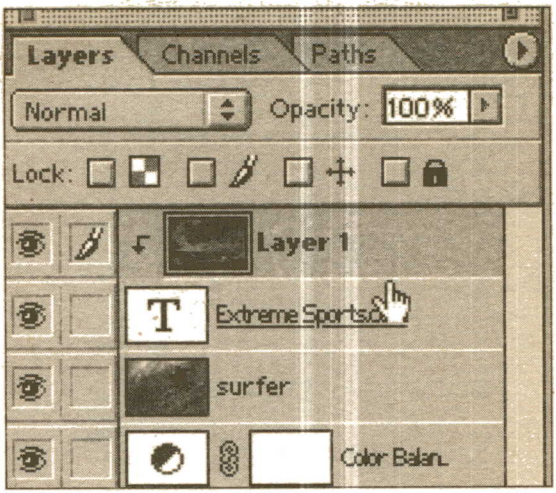
Use the 'Text' tool from the toolbar to write some appropriate text into the centre of the image. Make sure you use a clear font and try and ensure it can be seen. We've set our font size to 140 points and made the text bold.

20 OPEN UP

Open the file 'hangar.tiff' and drag it onto the image. Make sure it is positioned above the 'Text' layer – we are going to use this layer to become a clipping group. The 'Text' layer will then use the 'Hangar' layer as its fill. The remainder of the hangar will be masked out.



21 CREATE THE CLIPPING GROUP



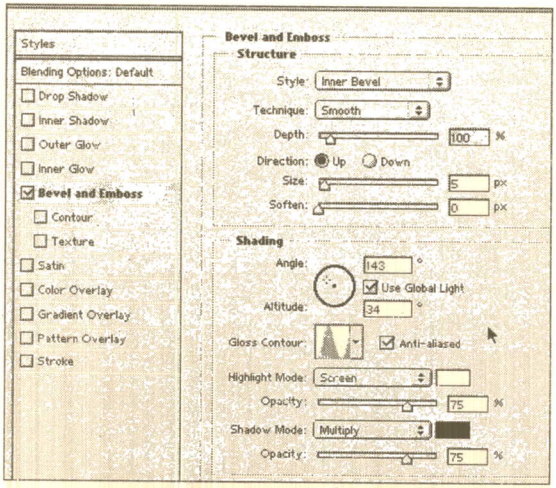
Hold down the 'Alt' key and position the cursor between the 'Text' layer and the 'Hangar' layer. The mouse will change to two overlapping circles. Click the line between the two layers and before your very eyes the text will act as a mask for the 'Hangar' layer. This is a clipping group.

22 MOVE AROUND

Select the 'Pointer' tool and move around the layer that has the hangar image. As you will see, the text stays in place and the hangar acts like a texture that you can move around. If you select the 'Text' layer, then the hangar stays in place and the text can be moved around to other locations.

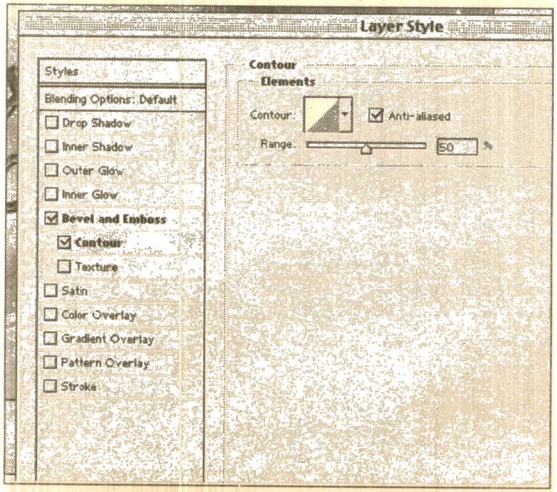
23 TEXT EFFECTS

Double-click on the text layer to bring up the Layer Styles. Click on 'Bevel and Emboss' and select the Gloss contour to the one shown in the screenshot. Finally click on the 'Anti-alias' checkbox to give a smooth edge. You will then see the effect take place on the text.



24 CONTOUR CORRECTION

Click the 'Contour' checkbox. Select the 'Anti-aliased' checkbox again to give it smooth edges. This will enhance the look of the bevel and emboss applied in the previous step. These effects are great to experiment with and you can use several together to get the final look that you desire.



25 STILL EDITABLE

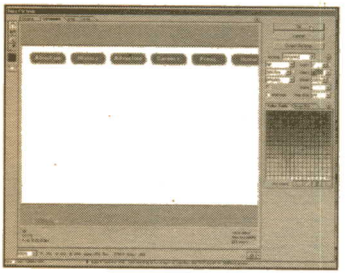
If you click on either the 'Hangar' or the 'Text' layer, you can move them around so they are still editable, to get the right texture over the text. If you use the 'Text' tool and click on the 'Text' layer, you can edit the text completely live, with all the embossing effects taking place instantly.

26 SAVE FOR THE WEB

Finally, adjust the image to the size you need for your Web site and select 'Save for Web'. If you save as a JPEG you can go as low as 15 for the quality setting and still get a really good image – that's because there is a limited colour palette, thanks to our 'Colour Balance' layer.

CREATE ACTIVE BUTTON ELEMENTS

CREATING WEB PAGE ELEMENTS HAS NEVER BEEN EASIER THANKS TO THE MANY NEW TOOLS IN PHOTOSHOP 6.0



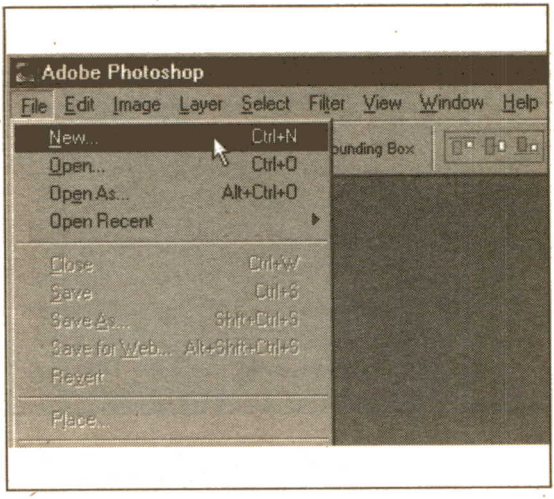
Within a few minutes of opening up the program, it's easy to start appreciating the sheer power and flexibility provided by Photoshop 6.0 and its vast arsenal of tools.

Once you get to grips with the basic principles behind the program, you'll soon realise that there are no boundaries to what you can create. The previous incarnations of Photoshop have seen a lot more focus on Web creation as well as design for print, and version 6.0 boasts a whole raft of extra features that are solely dedicated to the task of putting Web pages together.

In addition to being able to create a home page, the Web-orientated tools in Photoshop 6.0 mean that it is also possible to create dynamic buttons for a Web site. These will add a healthy splash of interactivity to your pages and help make them look great, too.

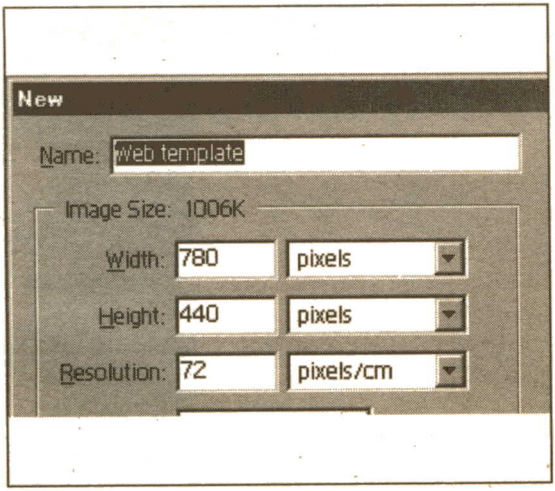
There are so many visual tricks that you can apply within Photoshop 6.0 that the biggest challenge is to stop yourself from adding too many. Remember, any Web site can be easily spoilt by an over-zealous use of graphics. Simple colours, functionality and a rigid 'less is more' approach will stand you in good stead when designing your pages. Let's stick firmly to this route while we create some menu buttons...

01 WHERE TO BEGIN



The first step is to set up a document. As Photoshop 6.0 can be used specifically for Web page construction, it's possible to build a whole template page from within one file. You need to decide on an ideal size, so go to the 'File' Menu and select 'New'.

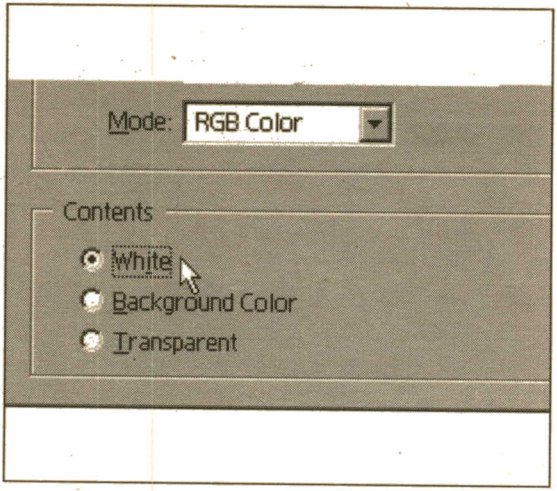
02 THE RIGHT DIMENSIONS



A dialog box will appear that allows you to specify your settings for the Web page template. Make sure that you name your file clearly, then specify the size in pixels. We're opting for 780 by 440, which will represent the viewable area of a browser set at an 800x600 resolution.

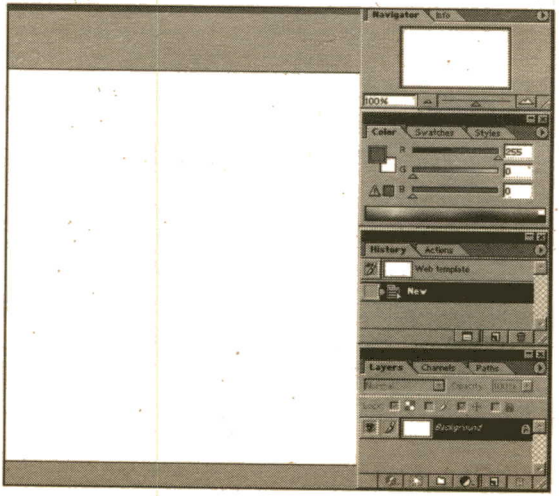
03 OTHER SETTINGS TO NOTE

Moving down the dialog box, note that you only need to have a resolution of 72dpi, which is standard for Web graphics. Anything higher and you'll end up with massive files. Also ensure that the document is RGB for Web output. You can also choose the file's background colour here, too.

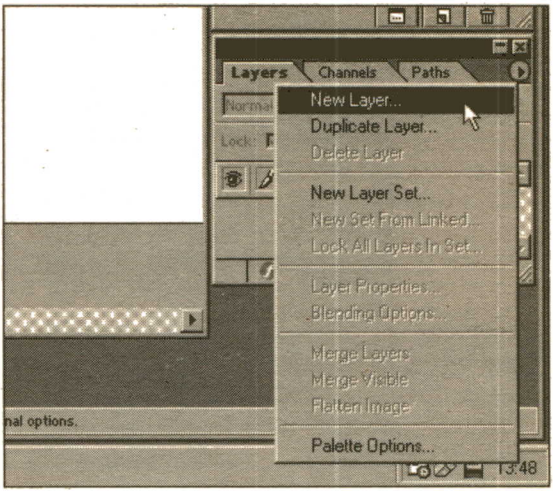


04 EXPLORING THE CANVAS

Here we see the new file sitting in the Photoshop interface. This is a blank canvas for us to add all of our buttons and bits. If you've followed the earlier tutorials, you'll know this white area is on a layer of its own, called 'Background', in the Layers palette.

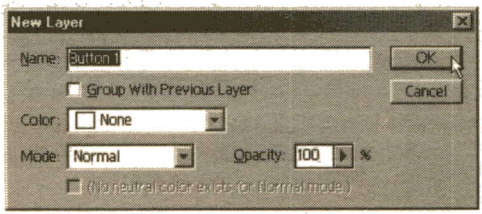


05 CREATE A NEW LAYER



Each button we create for our navigation bar is located on an individual layer of its own. Go to the 'Layers' palette and click the small tab on the right-hand side. This will give you the option of creating a new layer, which will be placed immediately above the background layer.

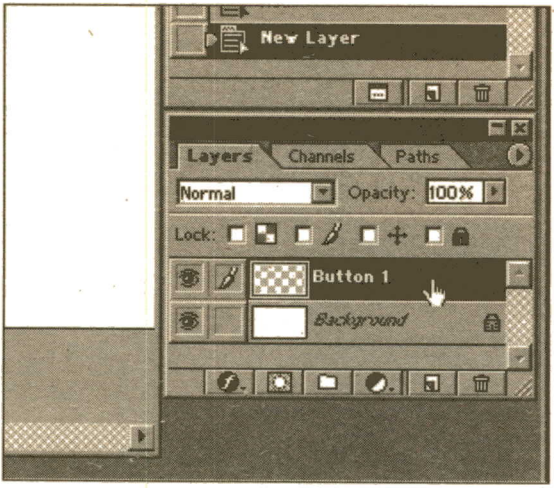
06 CUSTOMISE YOUR LAYER



A dialog box will appear, which allows you to customise the layer so that you will be able to recognise it when you need to edit any areas. Use the top text box to give your layer a name; in this instance we're calling it 'Button 1'. At this stage you won't need to edit anything else, so just press 'OK'.

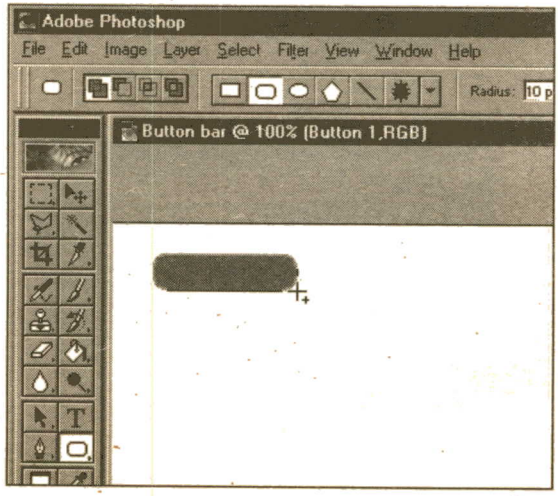
07 ONE ELEMENT PER LAYER

You'll notice that your new layer is present in the Layers palette. It's best to create a new layer for any individual elements that will be placed on your page. Creating your page this way means you can assign different filters or effects to one item, without affecting anything else in the work area.

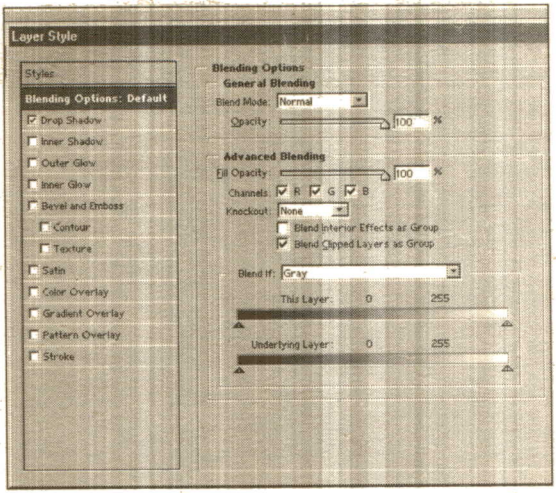


08 DRAWING YOUR BUTTON

Now we can start drawing our button image. Select the 'Rounded Rectangle' tool from the main toolbar and then draw a button shape on the canvas. Make sure that you're working on the Button 1 layer, rather than the background.

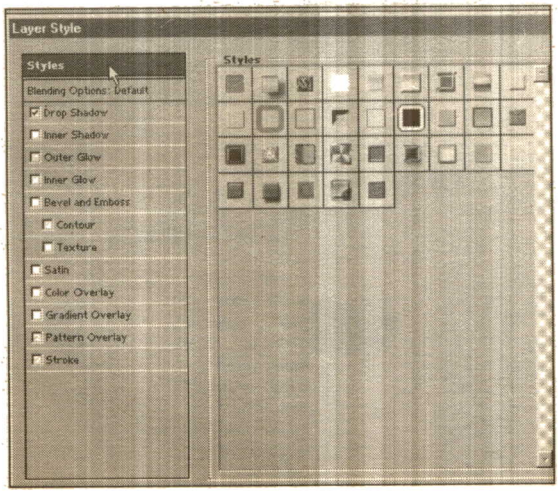


09 CHOOSING EFFECTS OPTIONS



A flat, solid colour button is fine for some designs, but if you are looking for a more striking, ambitious feel, double-click the 'Button 1' Layer. This will open up a dialog box with a host of other options that you can apply to the red rectangle.

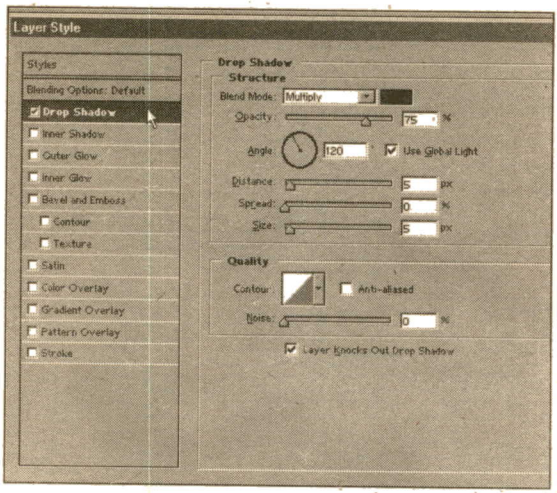
10 CHECK THE STYLES



If you click the 'Image Styles' tab, you'll see lots of pre-made button styles appear in the dialog window. To sample these effects, simply click on them and the style will be applied to your rectangle. If these aren't to your liking, it's possible to create one of your own.

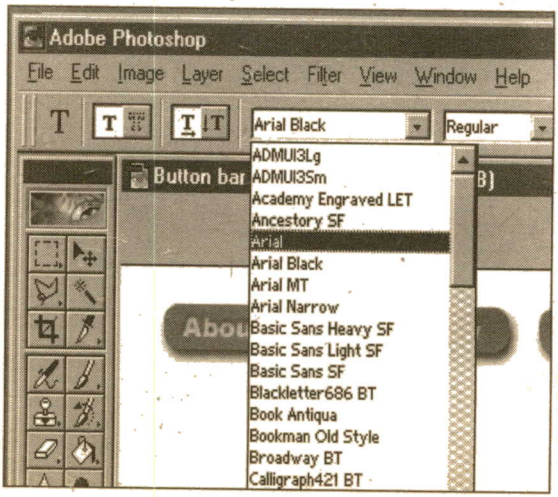
11 APPLY A DROP SHADOW

The other option is to select one of the other filters displayed in this window. A simple drop shadow effect always looks good because it helps to give your button a bit of depth and perspective. Use the 'Settings' tools in the middle of the window to get the shadow just how you like it.

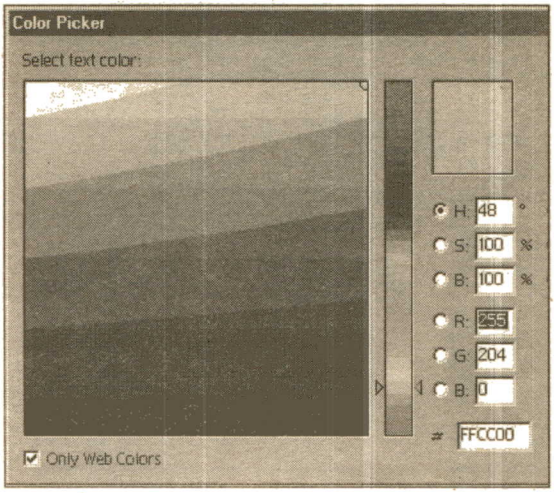


12 TIME FOR TEXT

The rectangle now has a nice subtle shadow. It's time to add some text to give our button a meaning. Click the 'Text' tool. Place your cursor where you want the text to appear on your button. It doesn't matter if it's not exact, as you'll be able to adjust this later on. Pick an easy-to-read font, too.

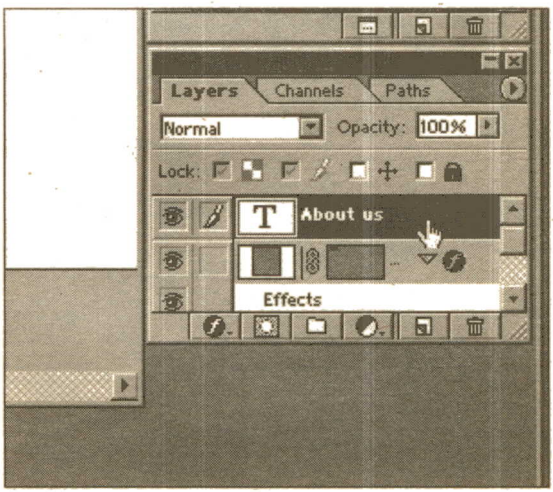


13 A SPLASH OF COLOUR



At this point you'll also want to select a contrasting colour for the text. Do this by clicking on the 'Colour' box in the top main menu. This dialog box will appear and allows you to select a colour from the Web-safe palette. This ensures your colours appear the same in any Web browser.

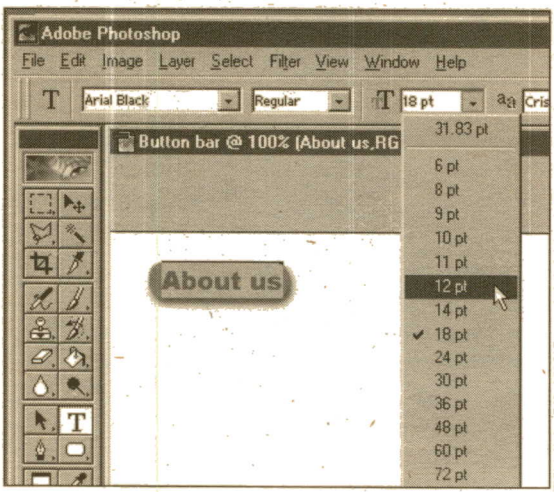
14 CREATE A TEXT LAYER



You'll find that once you've clicked your cursor on the canvas, an individual text layer will appear in the 'Layers' palette. This means that any effects or changes applied to your text will not affect other elements on the page, allowing you to customise your buttons even more.

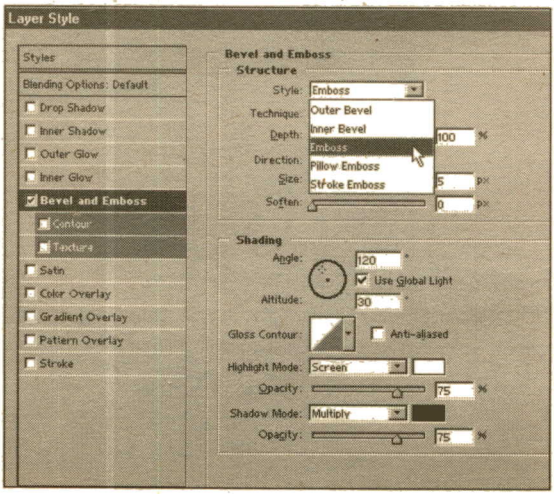
15 CREATIVE FREEDOM

Because you have so much control over each element, you can edit your image bit by bit. Here we're formatting our text, firstly for the correct size, but we can also change the font type, add more colour or make it bold, italic and so on. All of these effects can be applied from the top menu bar.

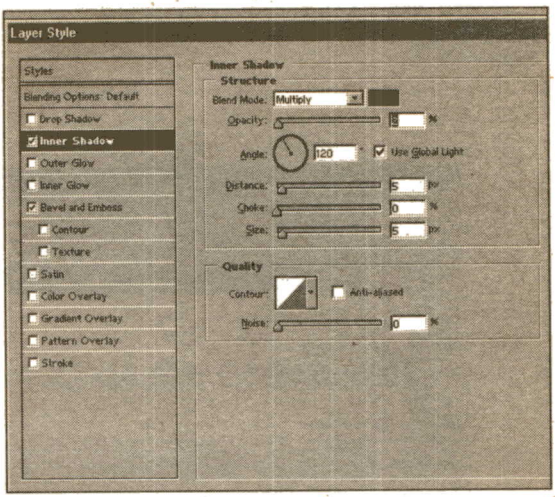


16 ADD SOME TEXT EFFECTS

Using the same principle as with applying the drop shadow effect, try double-clicking on the 'Text' layer in the palette. This will again open up the 'Effects' dialog box. We're going to apply another effect just to our text layer. This will give the button even more of a three-dimensional feel.

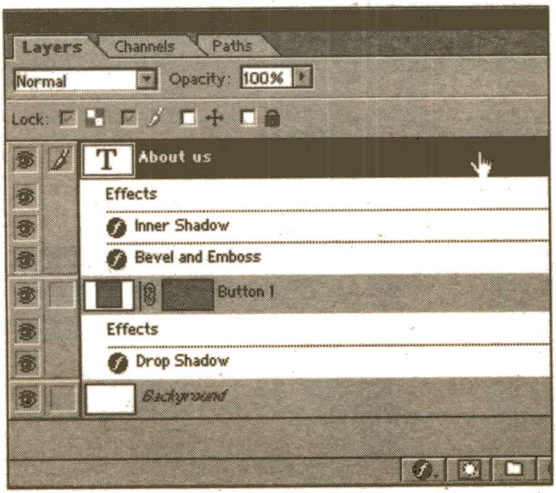


17 OTHER TEXT FEATURES



By double-clicking on each effects selection, the dialog box to the right will allow you to customise the style as much or as little as you like. Here we're adding a little more finesse to the text with an inner shadow. Just a few simple extras like this can really make your buttons stand out.

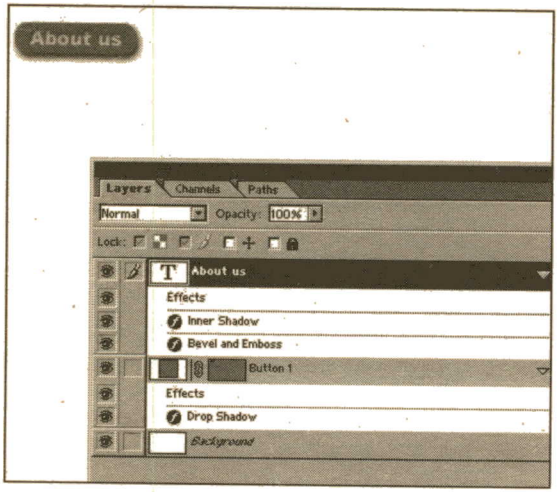
18 DUPLICATING ELEMENTS



Now that we've achieved all of our effects, we can check the composition by looking at the layers in the 'Layers' palette. This is also helpful as it provides you with the template for creating as many other buttons as you need. Repeat the process for each additional button you require.

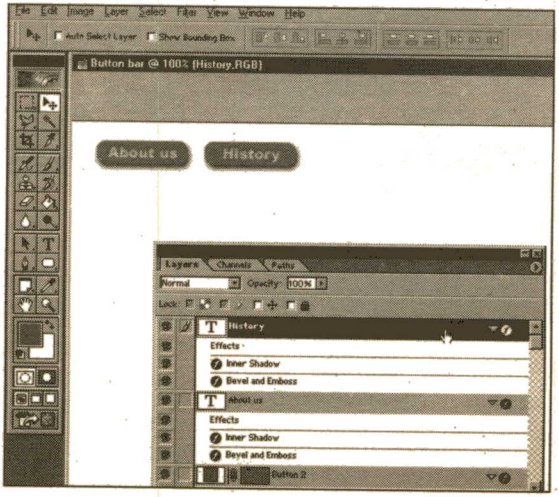
19 REPEAT THE PROCESS

The other quick way of doing this is to simply duplicate what you already have. Go to the right-hand side of the palette and select 'Duplicate Layer'. This will make a copy of any of the layers you wish to recreate and stack them above the ones you have already.

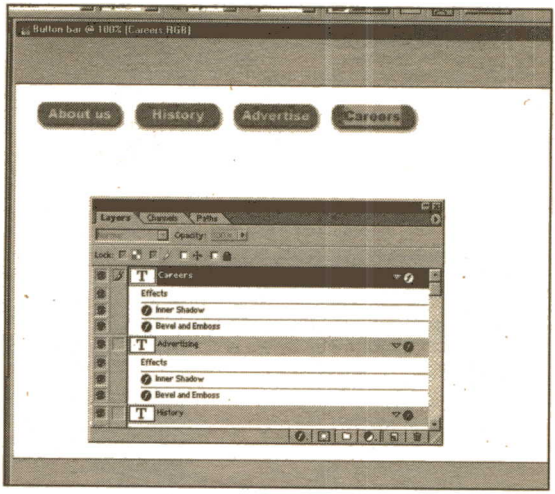


20 ADAPTING TO SUIT

Here you can see that we are building up our button bar, merely by duplicating the elements on the Layers palette. This effectively means that you only need to create one button, although remember that you will need to edit each text element to give it the right meaning for each button.

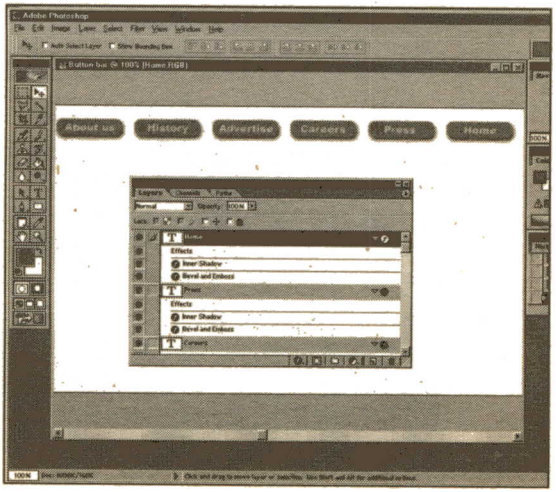


21 TIDY UP YOUR WORK



Repeat the process, making any changes as necessary until you have all of your button elements placed on the page and correctly named. Check that items are aligned perfectly and have consistent spacing between them. Little checks like this can make all the difference to the end product.

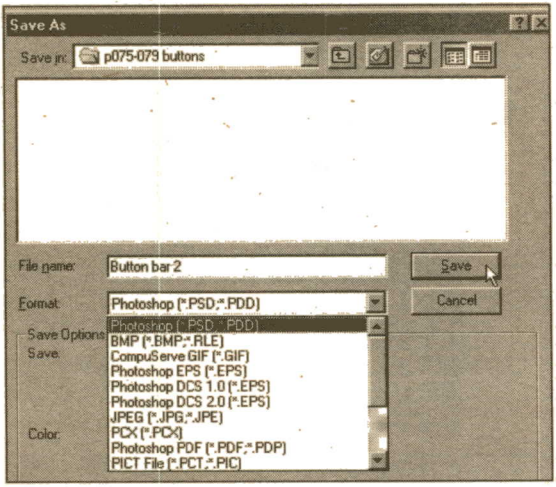
22 THE FINAL FURLONG



Here we see the complete Web button navigation bar with the various elements in place and all the effects applied. As you can see from the 'Layer' palette, every single element has been placed on its own layer. This means you can go back and change or update anything at a later date.

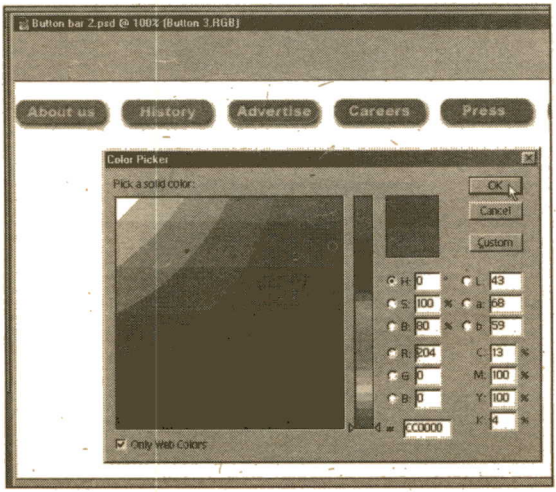
23 A SIMPLE TRICK

The trick with a button bar like this is to make a copy of the whole document. Go to 'File', 'Save As' and choose 'Copy' from the options. Rename the file as 'Button Bar 2'. You will now be able to create a set of buttons that can be used to create rollover links on a Web page.

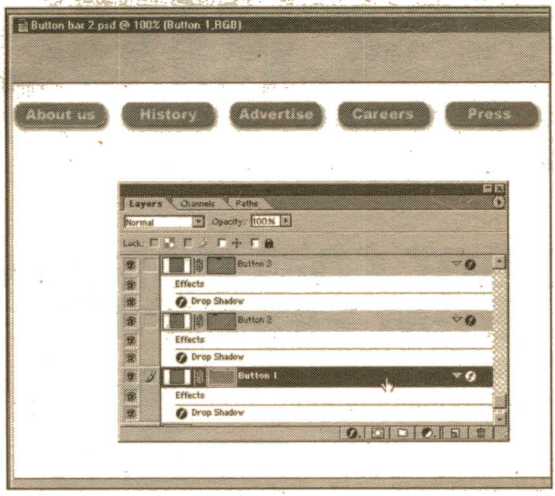


24 SMALL CHANGE

Using this duplicate file, go through all of the layers you want to change and make a slight amendment to the way they look. This can be a change of background colour or editing one of the effects – whatever you want. Just make sure that you make the same edit to each button, though.

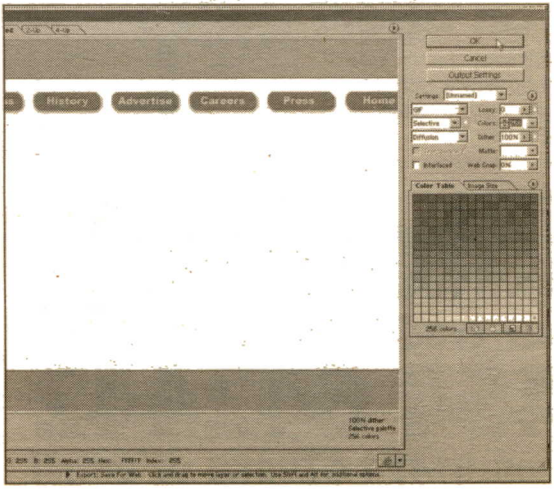


25 THE COMPLETE SET



We've changed all of the backgrounds to a darker shade of red – obviously you can alter effects as you need them. Nevertheless, once you have added both versions of the rollover to a Web page in a program like Adobe GoLive or Dreamweaver, the effects should look great.

26 FINISHING OFF



Now choose the 'Save For Web' option. This will provide you with optimised, Web-ready GIF images for your site. Crop each graphic closely so that you don't end up with extra file size that you don't need.

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PHOTOSHOP CHAPTER THREE

PHOTOSHOP ELEMENTS 2.0

86 OPTIMISE YOUR IMAGES FOR THE WEB

Reduce the file size of your images with these optimisation tips and speed up your Web site's loading time in the process

92 CREATE A WEB GALLERY WITH ELEMENTS 2.0

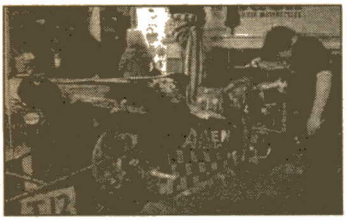
Proud of your digital camera snaps? Why not use the built-in photo gallery feature in Elements to showcase them on the Web? We show you how

98 BUILD STUNNING INTERFACES

Bring a touch of cutting-edge design to your Web site by building a stunning graphical interface with these step-by-step instructions

OPTIMISE YOUR IMAGES FOR THE WEB

IT'S EASY TO GET YOUR IMAGES READY TO USE ON THE WEB WITH ELEMENTS 2.0 – JUST FOLLOW OUR ADVICE

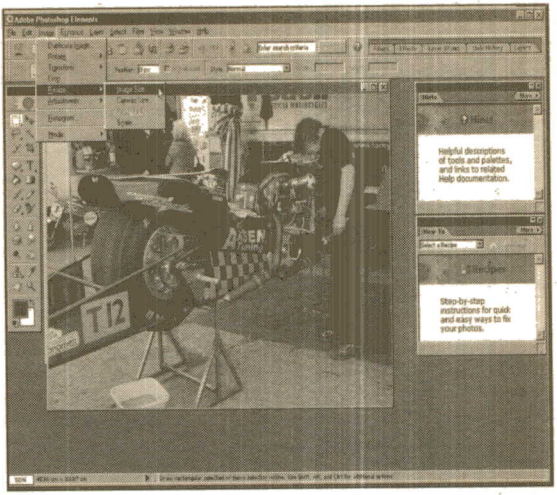


Thanks to the advent of digital photography and advances in scanning hardware, it is now possible to generate digital images in no time at all. And when you're using a program like Photoshop Elements 2.0, you can easily create your image and then edit it until it looks its very best. After all, not many of us have the same sort of skill level as a professional photographers and it's very easy for a snap shot to be ruined by a silly mistake with the composition. Once you become accustomed to the tools offered by Elements, however, you'll find that you can achieve sterling results with the minimum of technical know-how.

The latest version of Elements has many enhanced functions that let you work with both photographic images and solid colour images like cartoons and logos, both of which can be optimised before you add them to a Web site or online picture gallery. The reasons for optimising an image for the Web – in other words, just making it smaller – are pretty obvious. Due to the constraints of many people's Internet connections, large images can take an age to appear in a Web browser window.

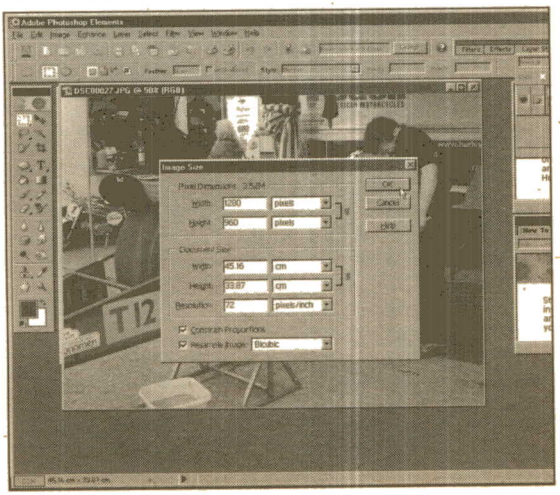
Photoshop Elements 2.0 walks you through the whole process of making your images' file size as small as possible while retaining optimum clarity. Here's a look at how it's done...

01 LOCATE YOUR IMAGES



Locate the images that need to be optimised. In their basic form, most images are quite big, so you need to crop photographs to a smaller format. Find out the dimensions by going to the 'Image' menu and selecting 'Resize', then 'Image size'.

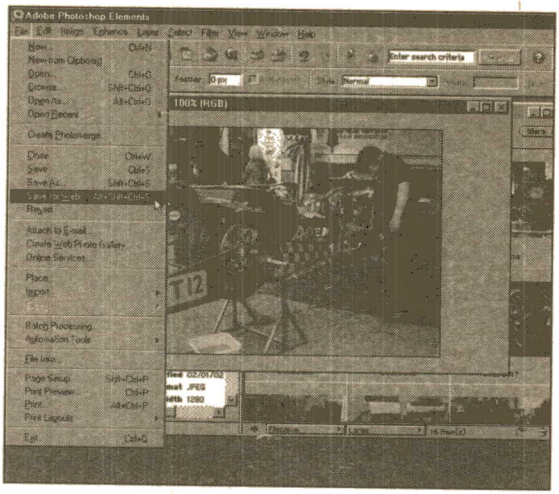
02 READY TO CROP



A dialog box will open with options for reducing the image size. The Pixel Dimensions information tells you the overall size. If you type a smaller Width and Height measurement, you'll see the file size reduce. Note also that the resolution is set at 72 pixels per inch, which is fine for the Web.

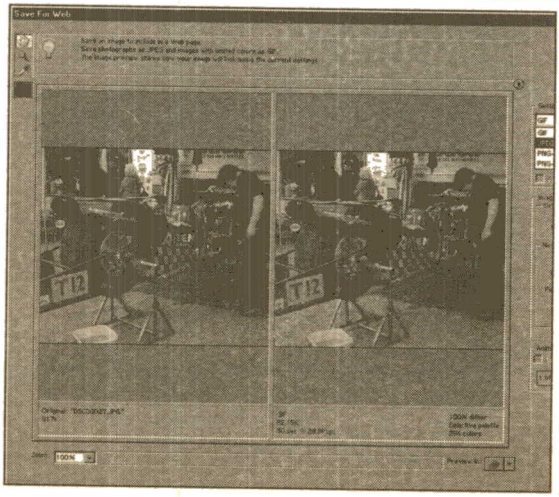
03 SAVE THE FORMAT

Now the image is at a more manageable size and resolution, you need to save the file in the correct format. This is simple within Photoshop Elements. Go to the 'File' menu and select the 'Save for Web' option. You will then be presented with a list of options for creating a Web-ready file.

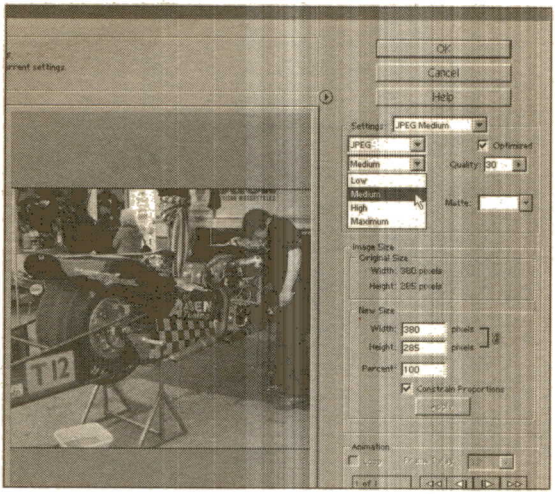


04 MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE

The next window has everything you need to save your file. In the case of photographs for the Web, this needs to be the JPEG format. Go to the drop-down menu on the far right-hand side and select this from the choices on offer. You will see a preview of the two main windows.

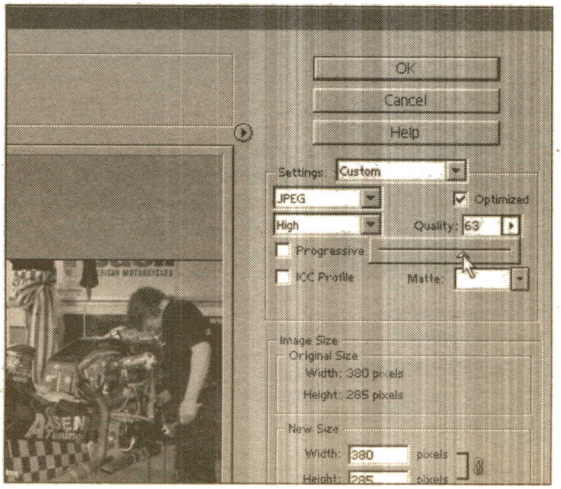


05 CHANGE THE SETTINGS



You can control the quality of files for the Web. Here we see the drop-down menu being selected and used to pick a 'Medium' setting. Bear in mind that although a lower setting means a smaller file size, quality will also be reduced, so check the preview windows before making a final decision.

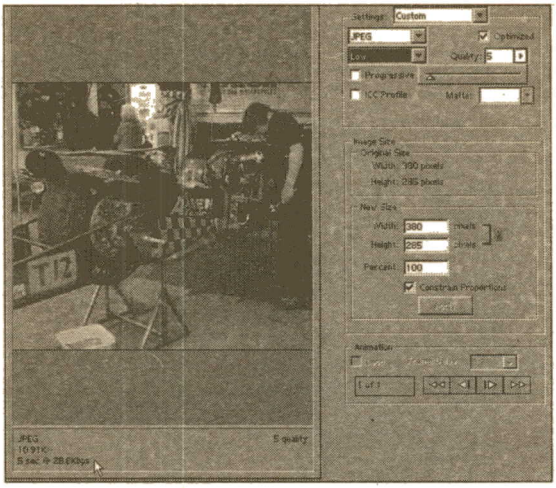
06 A SLIDING SCALE



It is also possible to compress the image using the slider next to the drop-down menus. Again, use the preview windows to decide which percentage the image looks best at. You'll be able to check how long the image will take to download on the Web using the statistics in this window.

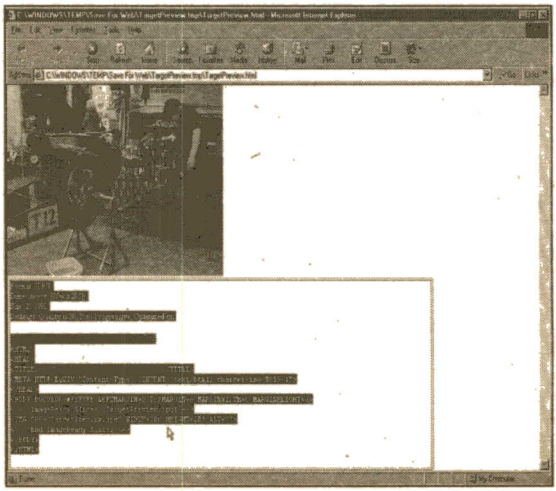
07 LOSING THE QUALITY

Here we can see the image has been over-compressed. Parts of the picture have become quite blurry and these are known as 'artefacts'. Although the download time is quite speedy, a better compromise needs to be found between file size and picture quality.

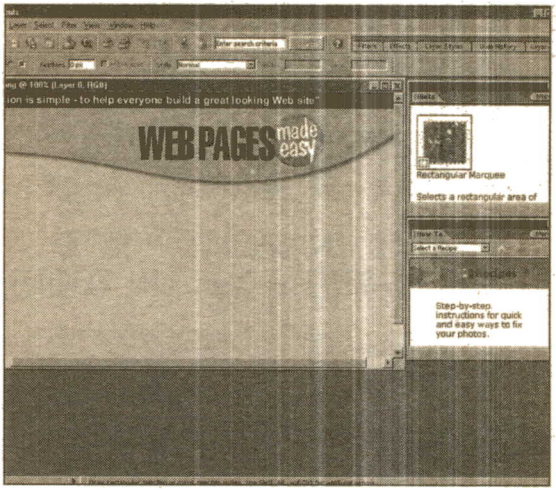


08 PREVIEW THE RESULTS

Photoshop Elements also has a button in the Web Ready window that lets you automatically preview your image in Internet Explorer. Notice that the file information is displayed underneath the image. If you are still not happy with the results, go back and adjust the image further.

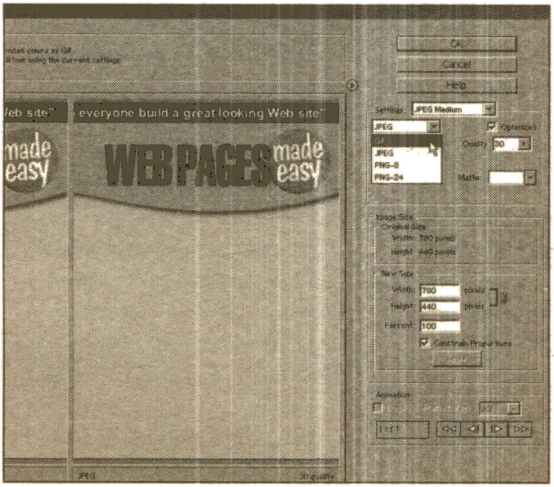


09 CHOOSE ANOTHER OPTION


ion is simple - to help everyone build a great looking Web site"
WEB PAGES made easy
Rectangular Marquee
Selects a rectangular area of
Step-by-step instructions for quick and easy ways to fix your photos.

We've seen the treatment you can give photos and what file format they need to be saved in. However, things like Web site logos and other non-photographic solid colour images need to be saved in another format. This can be as a GIF or PNG. Try this by opening a non-photographic image.

10 CUT THE COLOURS



This file has few colours in it, unlike a photographic image. Saving it as a GIF or PNG means that you can compress the file using the bare minimum of colour variants, which produces a much smaller file. Start this process as you did with the photo, but this time select the 'GIF' option.

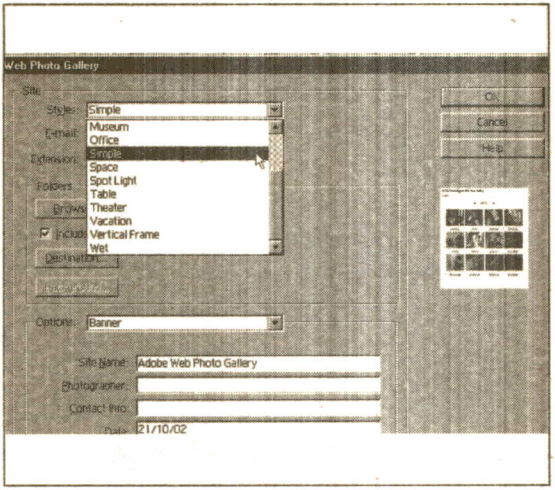
CREATE A WEB GALLERY WITH ELEMENTS 2.0

IT'S EASY TO CREATE AN ONLINE PHOTO GALLERY USING ELEMENTS' BUILT-IN TOOLS

Anyone with a penchant for photography will soon find that there are many excellent tools within Photoshop Elements 2.0 that allow you to get the best from your snaps. What's more, it's never been easier to share these with others – the new Web Gallery creation tool in the software is tailor-made for creating a gallery that can be uploaded for anyone to view your pictures. What was once a laborious process has been turned into a very slick operation that merely calls for you to supply a folder full of your favourite snaps. After some simple configuration, the software will then generate a Web gallery for you. The great thing about this feature is that you can keep updating the page content, so whenever you snap a new selection of pictures, they can be added to the Web alongside your existing pictures.

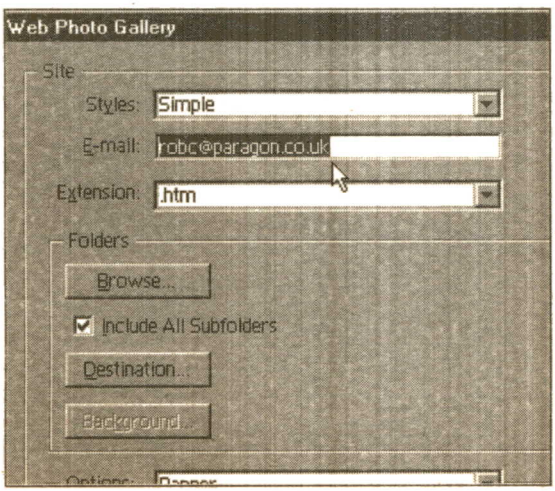
Once it has been generated, the Web Photo Gallery will be a fully-fledged Web site containing its very own home page and a set of thumbnail images plus gallery pages containing full size versions of the thumbnails. Each individual page will also have automatically generated links that enable your site visitors to find their way around. This means that when someone clicks on any of the thumbnails, it will subsequently load a full-size version of the same. Here's how it's done...

01 SETTING THE STAGE



To begin, go to the 'File' menu and select the 'Create Web Photo Gallery' option. When you see this screen, select an option from the 'Styles' pop-up menu. You will be able to see what the pages will look like from the preview window that is displayed to the right of this drop-down menu.

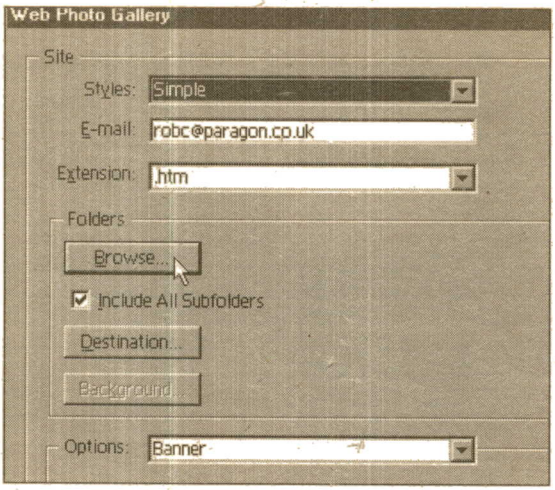
02 ADD YOUR EMAIL



There is also a text box that lets you add your own email address to the site. This means that visitors to your pages will be able to contact you with their comments or suggestions for developing the basic site. Make sure that you type this in correctly to avoid errors later on.

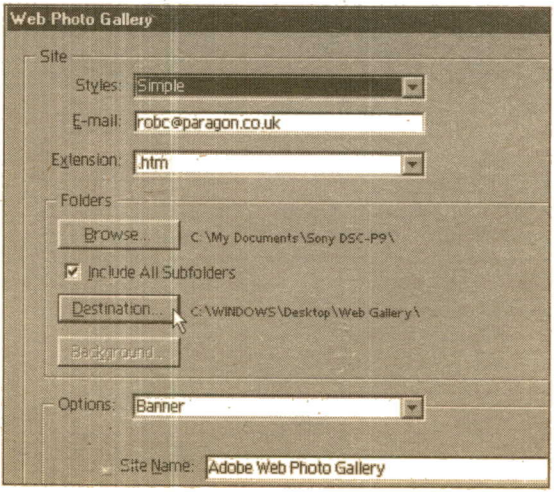
03 PICK A FOLDER

The next step is to select a folder by clicking the 'Browse' button. Navigate your way to the folder that will store all of your photos. Note that if you have a sub-folder inside the main one, you will need to specify this as well.

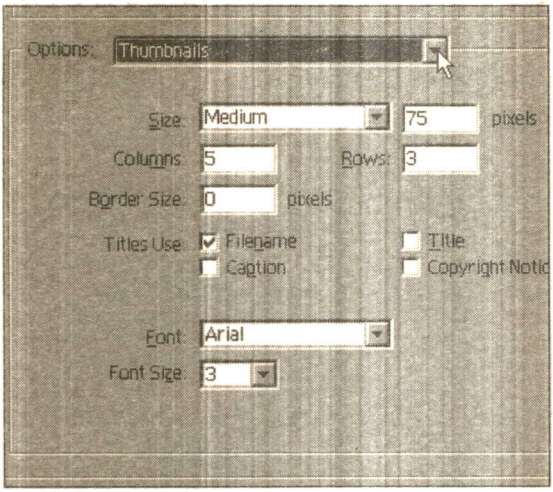


04 CHOOSE YOUR OPTIONS

You'll now need to specify the options that you want to apply to your site style. Enter a name for your site, the photographer and any contact information. You can also specify a date that you created the pages and define a font style and size.

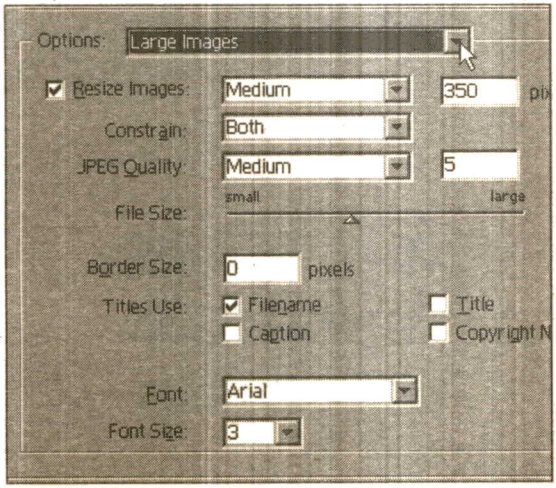


05 STATE THE SIZE



Specify the options for the size of images you want. Depending on which selection you make from the 'Options' drop-down menu, you will see a dialog window that allows you to make specific choices for how your thumbnails will display.

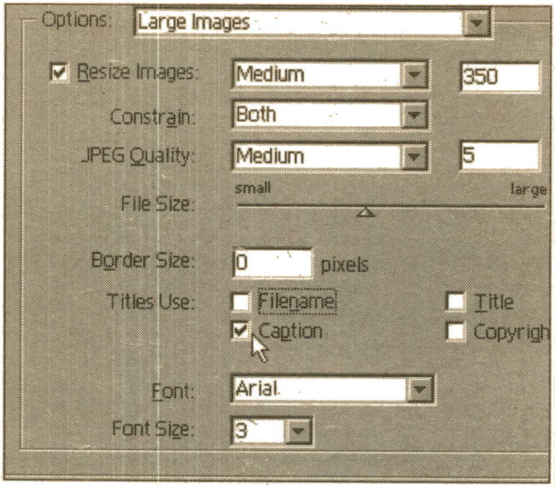
06 MORE PICTURE SETTINGS



Don't forget to do the same for the larger versions of the images. If you're not sure about this, just use Adobe's default settings. If you are more confident, it is possible to specify image size along with the amount of compression on your JPEG photo images.

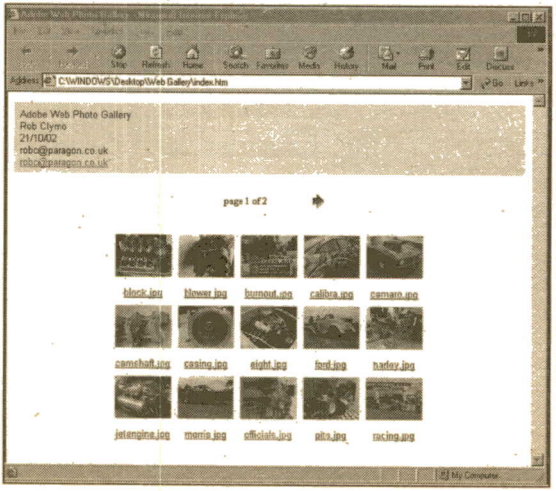
07 ADD SOME CAPTIONS

Now check which box you require to show information about your images. Here we are checking the 'Caption' box. You can add captions to your images by going to 'File', 'File Info' and entering the relevant information in the dialog box. When you're done, click 'OK' to generate the site.

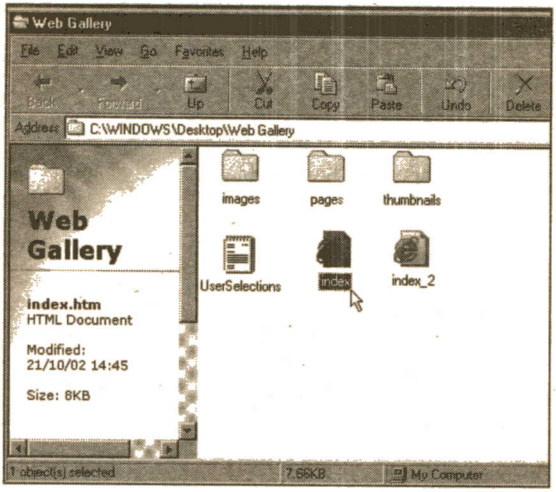


08 PREVIEW THE PAGES

Elements will automatically generate all of the site files you need. Depending on how many images there are, this should take no time. It will then open your default browser to let you check for errors. If anything is wrong, repeat the process and overwrite anything you don't need.

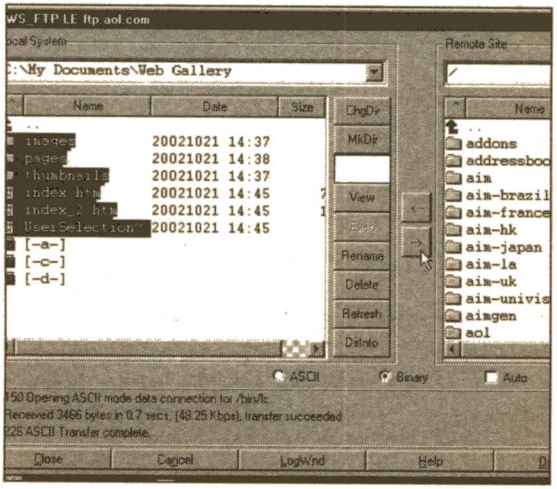


09 ALL THE COMPONENTS



Photoshop Elements will compile all of the components of your site and place them in the main folder that you selected. This includes all of the relevant images, plus the index pages that act as the main holding area. All of this will then need to be copied to some Web space, as shown below.

10 UPLOAD TO THE WEB

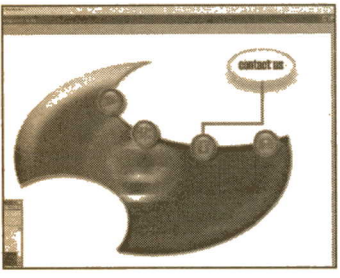


Use a software program like WS FTP or CuteFTP. You will need to specify server and account settings, which can be obtained from the company hosting your Web space or your ISP. Once connected, transfer all of these files from your local computer straight to the Web.

BUILD STUNNING INTERFACES FOR YOUR WEB SITES

TUTORIAL FILES ON THE CD

DISCOVER HOW TO MAKE A GRAPHICAL INTERFACE TO SPICE UP YOUR SITE



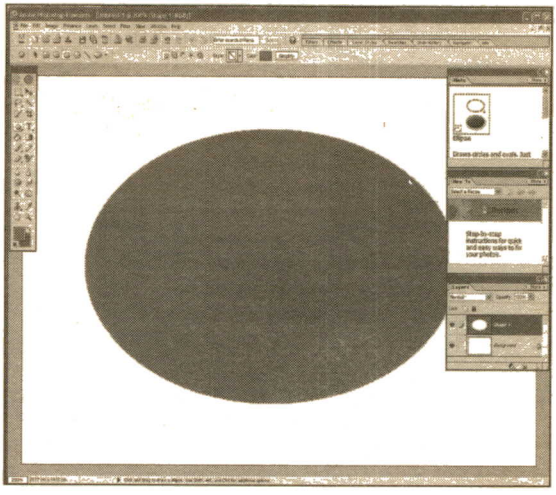
When most people come to build a new Web site, they automatically pick up their favourite WYSIWYG package and start laying it out using tables and frames. While we admit this is a steady and solid way of creating a layout, but it can often lead to a dull and lifeless site.

Take a different route, however, and you can end up with an altogether more exciting and dynamic site. If you start with Photoshop Elements 2.0, and build up your interface in entirely graphical objects, it's fairly easy to create the kind of site that you never thought you were capable of.

In essence, all we're going to do is create a main shape to act as the interface for the site. As you'll see, though, adding a few layers and effects will give you a graphic to be proud of. As this is going to act as the main interface, we're obviously going for as small an image size as possible, and we managed to whittle ours down to a mere 13Kb, which will load quickly in virtually any browser.

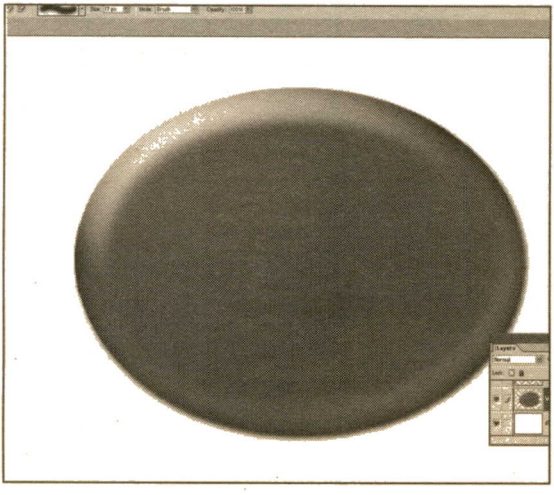
Because Photoshop Elements doesn't cater for slices and hotspots, you have to get a bit clever with the actual buttons for your site. Instead of building up the whole interface and then applying slices, we're saving each graphic individually. This is so that, when it's all done and dusted, you can hark back to your trusted WYSIWYG package to import it all in again.

01 START AT THE TOP



Create a new image with dimensions of 600x400, which should give you enough space to create your graphics. Click on the 'Ellipse' tool, then draw an ellipse to take up around two-thirds of the page. Don't worry about colours.

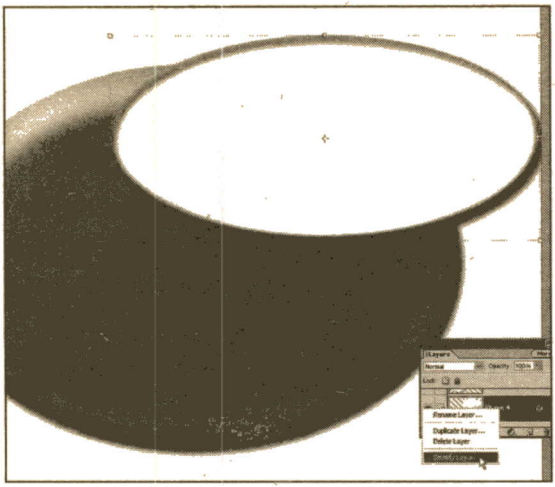
02 STYLE IT UP



The ellipse looks a little dull, so click the 'Layer styles' tab, then select 'Glass buttons', 'Green glass'. Next, move to the 'Drop shadows' section, and choose 'Low'. Right-click on the layer in the Layer palette, and choose 'Simplify layer'.

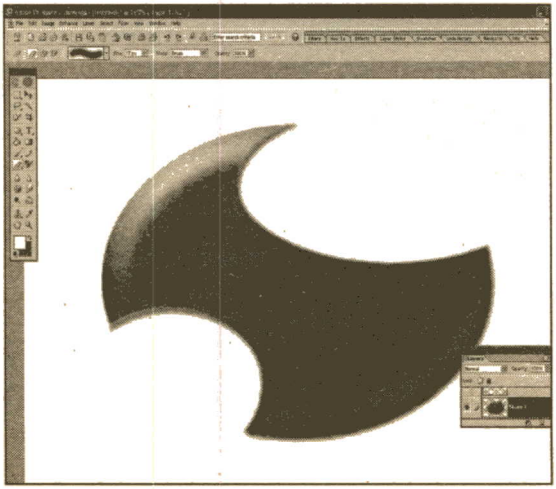
03 SIMPLE CUTOUTS

Draw another ellipse at the top-right of the shape, making sure that you've chosen the same colour as your background. Next, choose 'Low' from both the 'Drop shadows' and 'Inner shadows' sections. Then select 'Simple inner' from the 'Bevels' section, and simplify the layer.

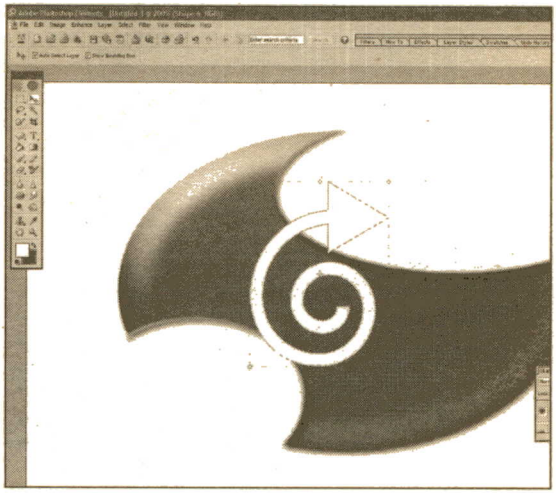


04 AND REPEAT...

Draw another ellipse on the bottom-left. Go into each of the white shape layers, then select the 'Eraser' tool and remove the sections outside of the green shape. Make sure you've selected a brush with a feathered look.

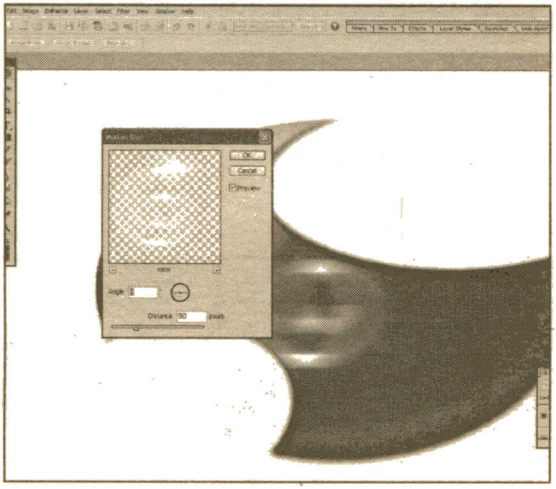


05 A COOL NEW SHAPE



For the finishing touch to this background, click on the 'Custom shapes' tool, then choose 'All Elements shapes'. Choose a curly arrow, like the one shown here, then draw it on-screen holding down the 'SHIFT' key to constrain its proportions.

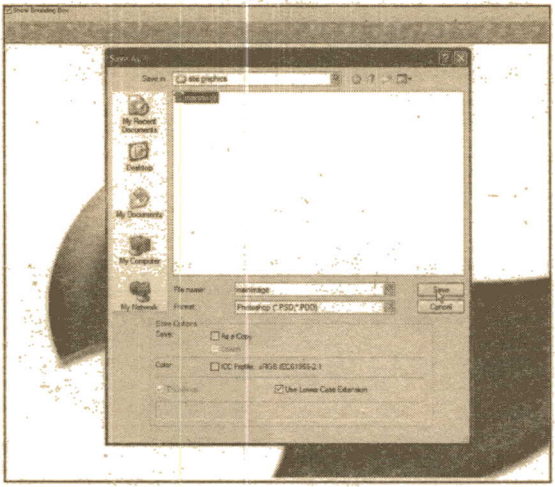
06 BLURRY EDGES



Drag the layer that this new shape sits on below the two white blobs, so that it only appears on the green shape. Now go to 'Filter', 'Blur', then 'Motion Blur'. In here, move the slider to around 50, then click on 'OK' to apply the blur.

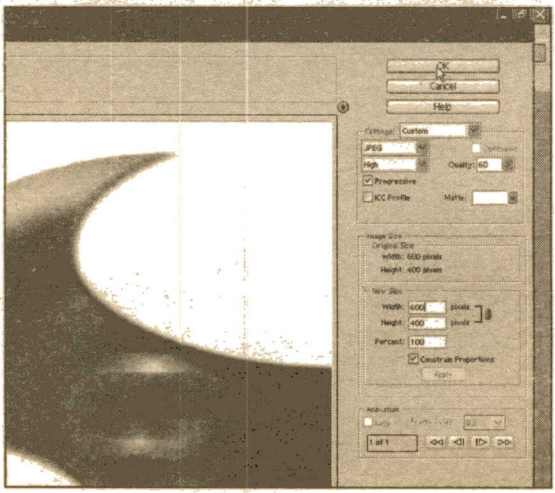
07 FLATTEN AND SAVE

With the main shape done, click 'More' in the Layer palette, and choose 'Flatten image'. Now go to 'File', 'Save as', and give your image a name. This is important, as we'll be reloading this image several times.

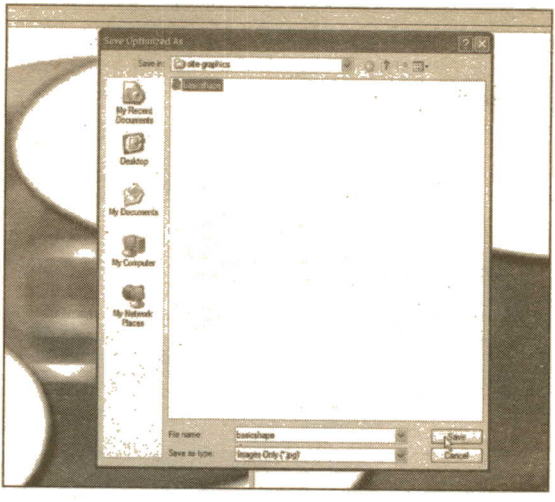


08 SAVE FOR THE WEB

The Photoshop Elements file is saved, so let's now save this shape as a JPEG for use on the Web. Go to 'File', then choose 'Save for Web'. We've gone for a JPEG with a quality setting of 60, which gives us a relatively small 12Kb file.

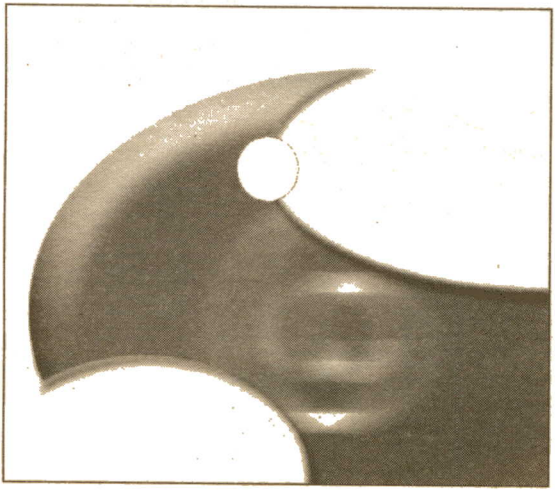


09 SAVE IT



Click on 'Save' in the top right-hand corner. In the Explorer window that appears, navigate to the same folder you saved your original Photoshop file in, then save the JPEG as 'basicshape'. The first section of your front-end is now sorted.

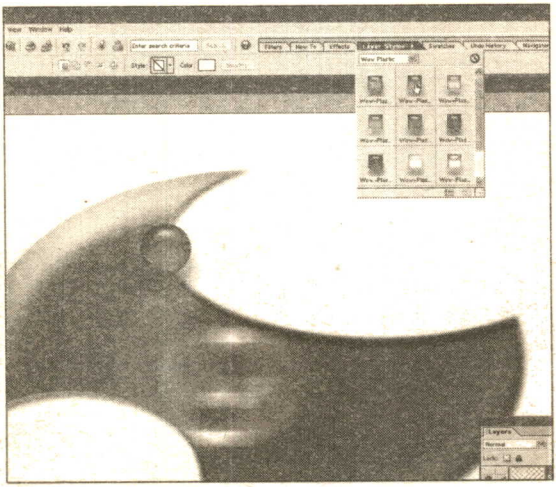
10 THE FIRST BUTTON



Back in the main image, let's draw our first button. To do this, click on the 'Ellipse' tool in the main toolbar. Hold down the 'SHIFT' key for a perfect circle, then draw a smallish button around the point indicated in the screenshot.

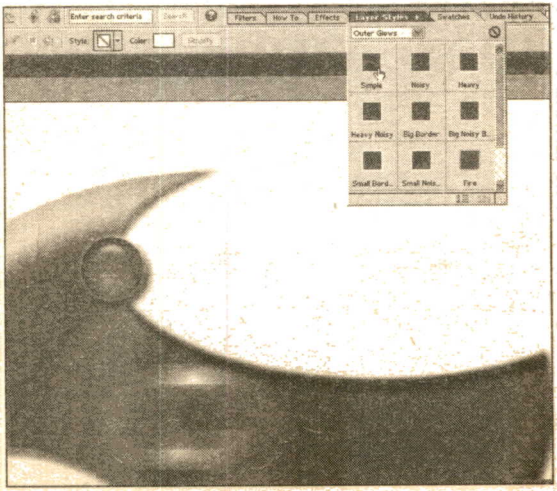
11 A NEW STYLE

Simplify the layer, then go into the 'Layer styles' tab. In here, go to 'Wow plastic', where you can get some of the best effects of all. Click on the 'Green' icon to apply this style, but don't simplify the layer yet, as we've still got work to do.

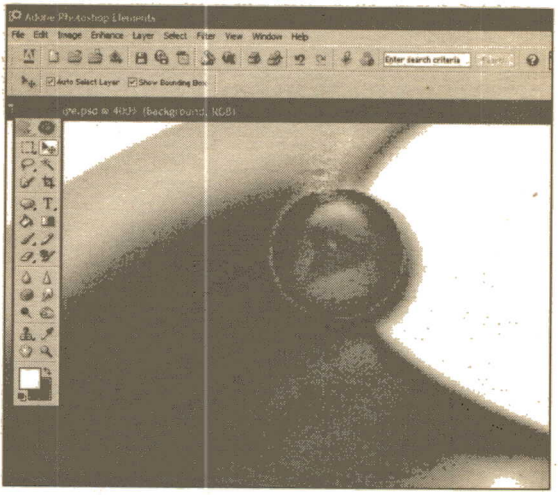


12 A BETTER EFFECT

Simplifying a 'Wow Plastic' style usually leaves you with a more accentuated style, so go to 'Drop shadows' and choose 'Low'. After this, go to 'Outer glows' and pick 'Simple'. This should fix many of the problems, so it's time to click on 'Simplify'.



13 A BUTTON SHAPE



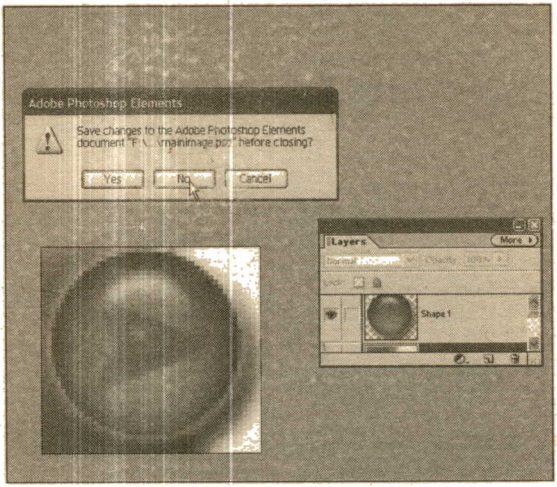
Now we want to add a shape to sit on top of the button. We've gone for an arrow from the 'Custom Shapes' palette. Again, go to the 'Layer Styles' tab, then select a clear 'Wow Plastic' style. Simplify the layer to apply the effect.

14 MORE FLATTENING

Press 'CTRL' + 'S' on the keyboard to save the file as it stands. After doing this, go into the main toolbar and click on the 'Crop' icon. Draw around the button, then double-click on the selection to perform the crop.

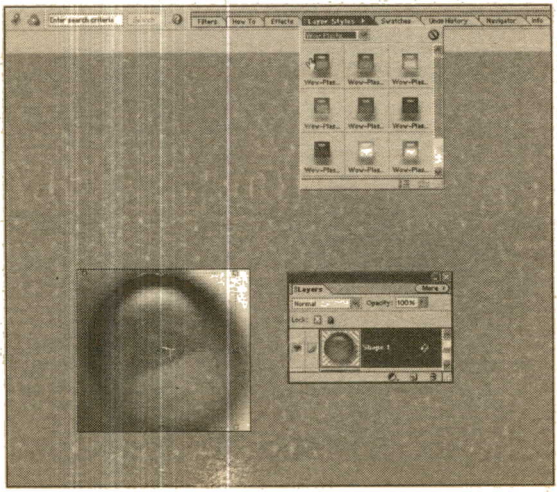
15 SAVE FOR THE WEB

Don't worry that you can see the main shape behind this. Go to 'File', 'Save for Web'. Again, pick the best settings for the image – we've chosen a JPEG. Close down the image, choosing 'No' when you're asked if you want to save it.

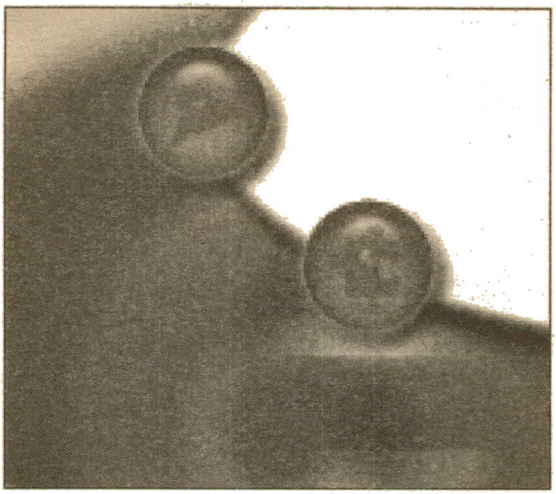


16 ROLL ME OVER

In order to create the graphic you need for a rollover, use this cropped version. Move to the layer that contains the round button, and apply a different layer style to it. Go to the 'Save for Web' dialog and call it something like 'button1over'.

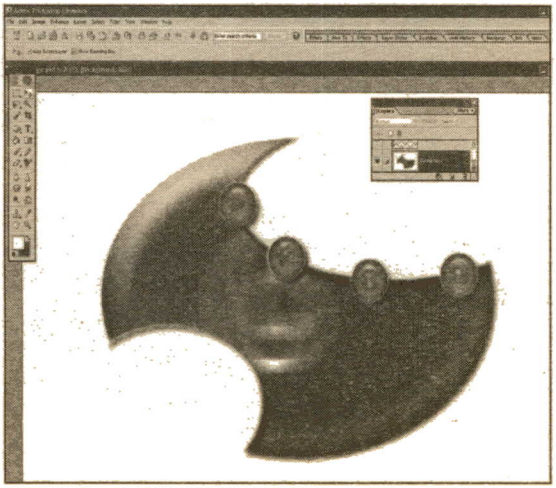


17 ANOTHER BUTTON



To create another button, simply click on the button layer, then go to 'More' in the Layer palette. In here, choose 'Duplicate layer', and move the new shape. Insert another image to sit on top of this button, and style it up like before.

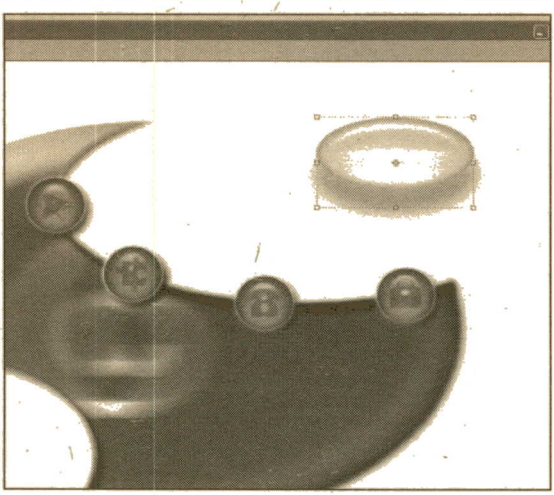
18 MORE BUTTONS



Use the same principles to build up a bar of buttons to sit on the top of your shape. Crop the button each time to get the right size, then create your rollover from this. Make sure you save before you do this, then revert back afterwards.

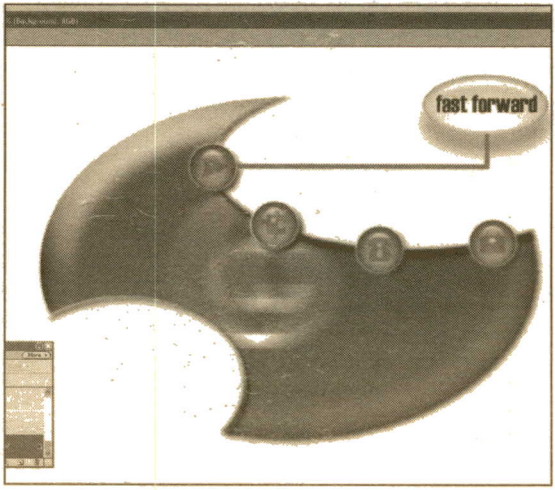
19 MORE MENU ACTION

If you really want to dazzle your visitors, why not create additional menu items that will appear when they click on each of the buttons? To do this, first of all create an ellipse, then apply a white plastic layer style to it.

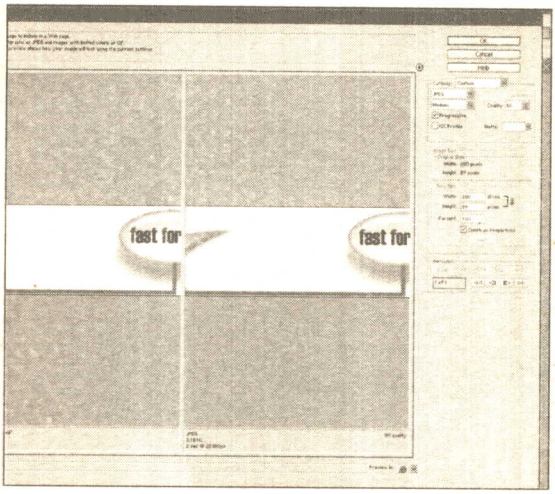


20 THE REST OF IT

Enter some text in the button and style it up using the font alteration tools. Having done that, draw a blue line from your first button to underneath the new shape, then draw another from the edge of this to the bottom of the button.

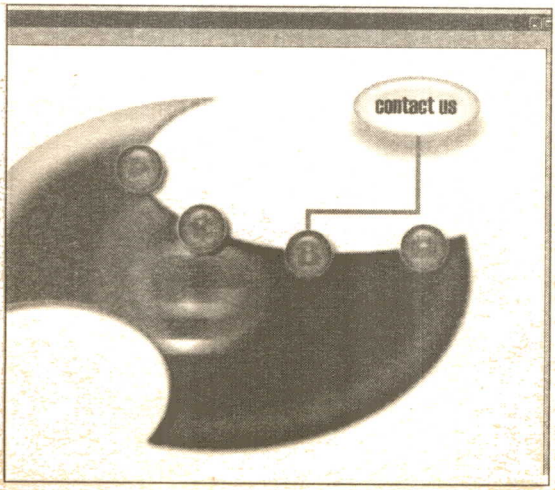


21 EXPORT THIS OUT



Save your main file, then crop it to include just the lines and the new shape and text. Go to 'File' then 'Save for Web'. You should be able to save this as a 2-3Kb JPEG without losing much quality. Revert back to your larger file again.

22 ALL FINISHED



Because we've exported each section in turn, you can go back and reuse the same lines and shapes for each mouseover event. After you've done this, you've created every single graphic you need for a fully-working home page.

PHOTOSHOP CHAPTER FOUR

PHOTOSHOP 7.0

112 BUILD A STUNNING FRONT-END

Wow visitors to your Web site with a dazzling front-end created entirely from original artwork in Photoshop 7.0

130 DESIGN YOUR OWN BANNER ADVERT

Banner adverts are perfect for attracting visitors to your Web site. In this project we show you how to use ImageReady 7.0 to forge a stunning ad in animated GIF format and add it to a Web page

BUILD A STUNNING FRONT-END

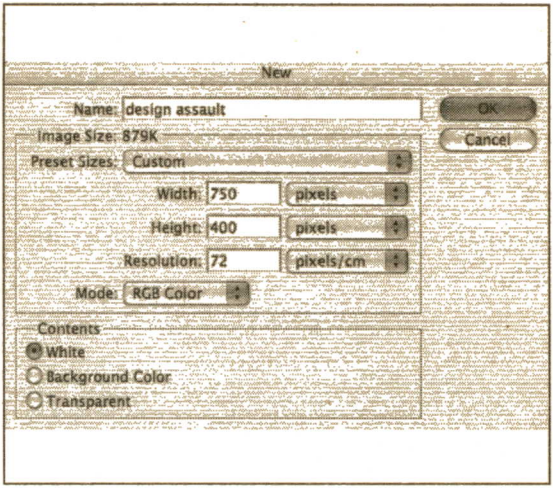
IMPRESS YOUR SITE'S VISITORS BY USING A FRONT-END CREATED IN PHOTOSHOP 7.0

What a visitor sees when they first come to your site determines whether they stay or leave for pastures new, so you need to pull out all the stops to make sure your visitors are greeted with something to grab their interest.

Front-ends are the key to making your site something special. They are basically the main page of your site and if done properly, can showcase all the great content your site has to offer. A lot of front-ends rely on graphics to add interest, which makes Photoshop 7.0 the ideal program for the job. We're going to show you all the features you might use when creating a front-end and then explain how to import the final image after it has been sliced up. This is easily done thanks to the Slice tool in Photoshop. These slices will have URLs added them in an HTML editing package and become the navigational buttons of the site. The images and HTML page will all be generated by Photoshop, which saves so much time.

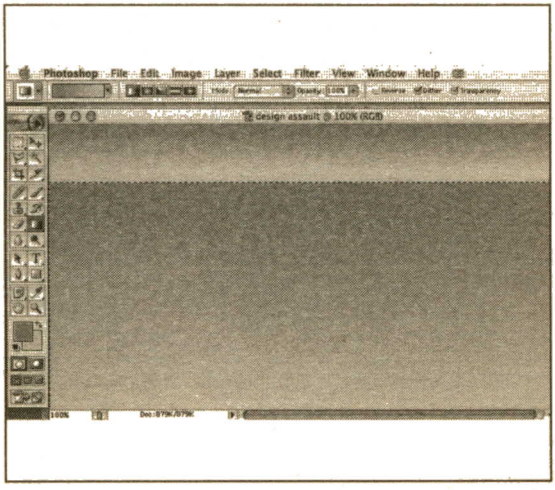
We are going to create our image in a contemporary style which emulates award winning Web designers such as WeWorkForThem, Designgraphik and Dform 1. All of these designers use subtle colour gradients with abstract shapes, which we will use to make the background of our image. Then we are going to make the foreground suitable for our fictitious design agency 'Design Assault'. You can obviously change this to suit your particular content. All you need to get going is on the CD.

01 STARTING OUT



Start your front-end by opening Photoshop 7.0 and creating a new document. Click 'File' and select the 'New' option. In the pop-up dialog box, make the document 750 pixels wide by 450 pixels high so that it fits the majority of browser windows. Name this document 'design assault'.

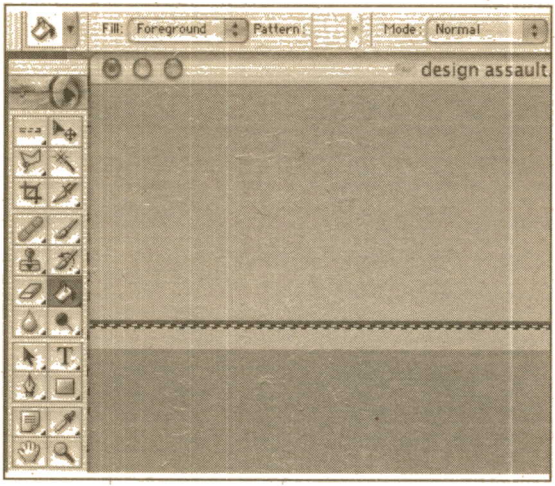
02 IT'S ALL IN THE BLEND



Choose a blue/green colour for your foreground and a lighter one for your background. Now select the 'Gradient' tool and drag from the top down to make your gradient towards the top of the screen. Select the majority of the screen with the 'Marquee' tool and fill with the blend.

03 ALL LINED UP

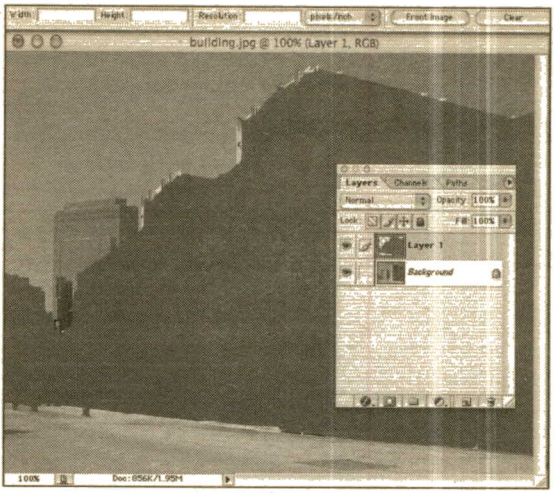
Use the single row Marquee tool to select a one-pixel horizontal row and fill this with a darker colour. Click the 'Marquee' tool again and move the marquee to the next pixel under the first line and again fill that with the same colour, which gives a two-pixel line across.



04 BUILDING BLOCKS OF DESIGN

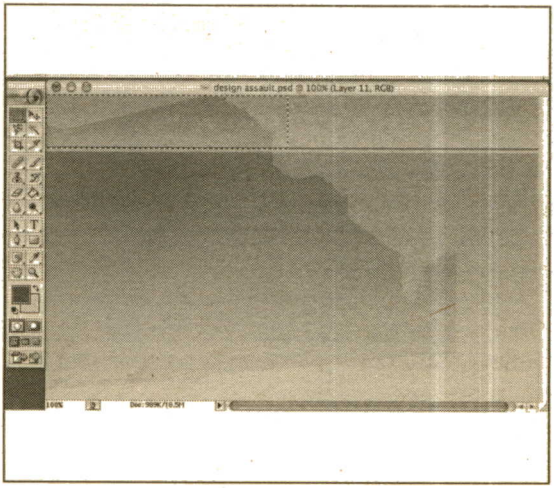
Open the file from the cover CD called 'building.jpg'. Use the 'Magnetic lasso' tool from the toolbar to cut around this image by clicking on a point and guiding your mouse around the image. If the tool begins to struggle, just do a mouse-click. This will give you a selection.

05 NEW LAYER



Create a new layer by clicking the 'New layer' icon in the Layer palette. When you have one, choose a slate grey colour and fill the shape you have, then crop the image to get rid of the loose corners. When you have done this you can deselect your selection ('Ctrl+D').

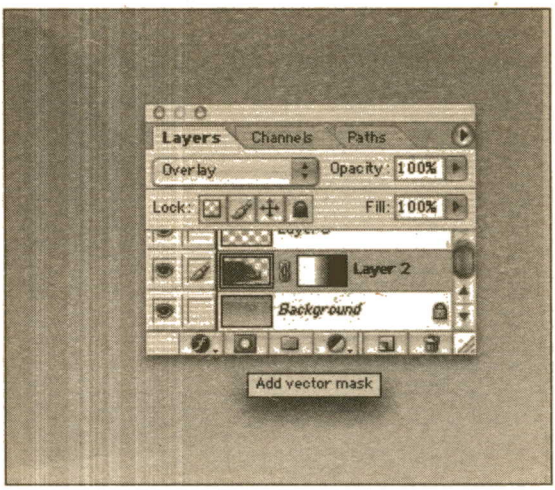
06 IT'S A DRAG



Drag your filled coloured layer, which should be Layer 1, across on to your project. Change the blending options to 'Overlay' in the Layers palette. Now flip the layer horizontally in the 'Edit', 'Transform' menu and then select the top of the image above the line using the 'Marquee' tool.

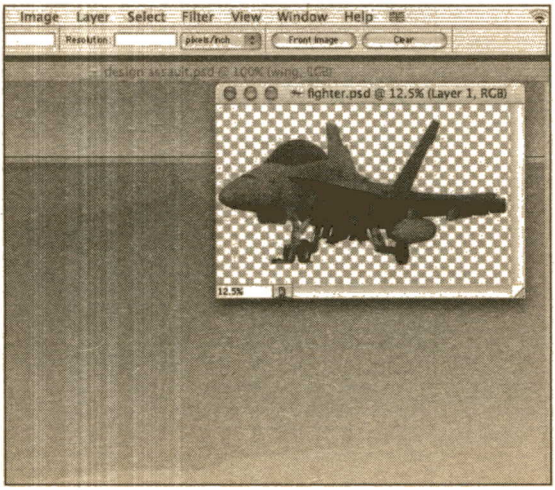
07 CUT AND PASTE

Cut the selection ('Ctrl+C'), paste it to another layer ('Ctrl+V'), then flip it horizontally and position it as above. Click on the 'Layer mask' option in the Layer palette. Using the 'Gradient' tool, draw across the far end of the main building shape layer to get a fade out blend.

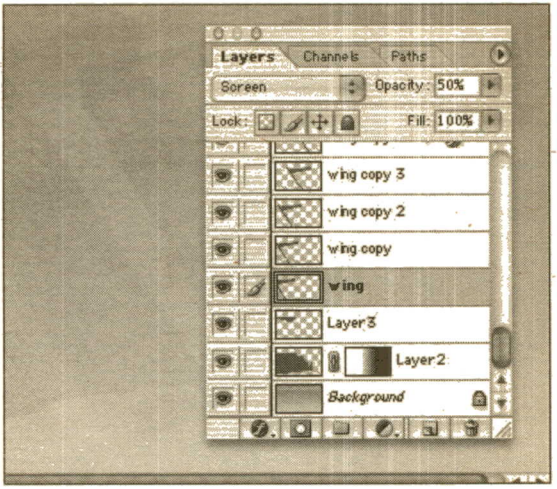


08 FIGHT CLUB

Open the image 'fighter.psd' from the cover CD. We're going to use the shape 'layer 1', so drag this back into the main 'design assault' project and rename this layer 'wing'. Make the blending mode 'screen' for that layer and position as in the screenshot – you will need to rotate the image.

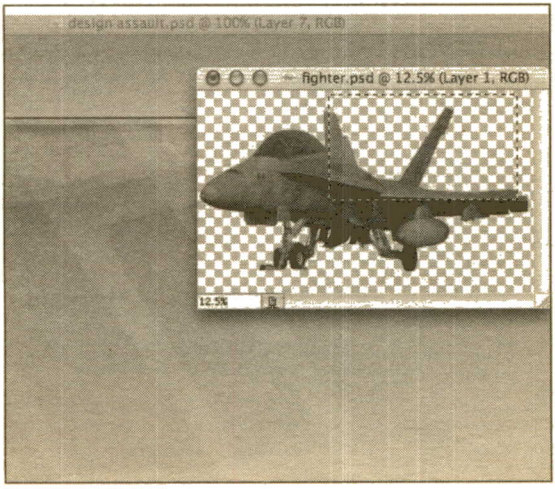


09 COPY IT



Copy the layer by dragging it on to the 'New layer' icon in the Layer palette (next to the Trash). Do this four times in total and then move the layers across the screen. You can use 'Shift' and the left cursor key to make a layer jump 10 pixels to the left, which keeps the layers aligned.

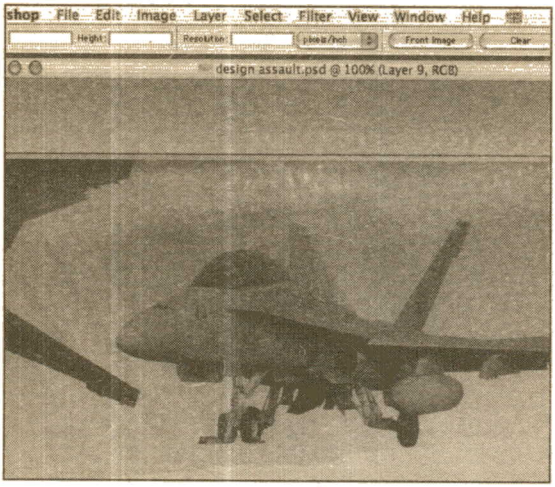
10 FIGHTER PILOT



Go back to the 'fighter' image and select 'layer 1' using the marquee as shown above. Now drag this onto the main document and resize using 'Edit', 'Transform' and 'Scale'. You can then rotate from the same Transform menu until your image looks like the one shown here.

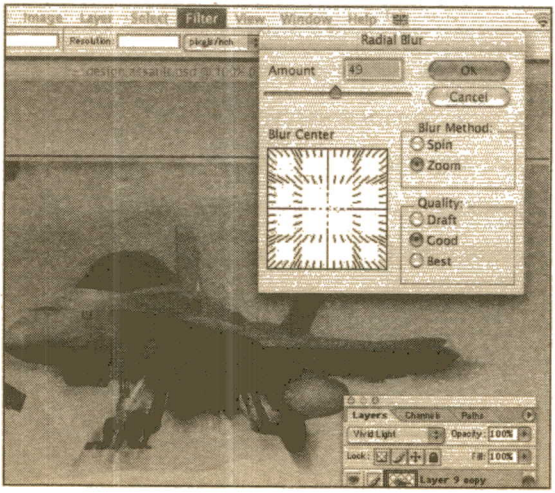
11 FIGHT ON

Change the blending of this layer to 'Multiply'. Go back to the 'fighter' image and deselect the selection ('Ctrl+D'). Drag 'layer 1' across into the main 'design assault' document, changing the opacity to 70% in the Layer palette. Position the aircraft to the centre.

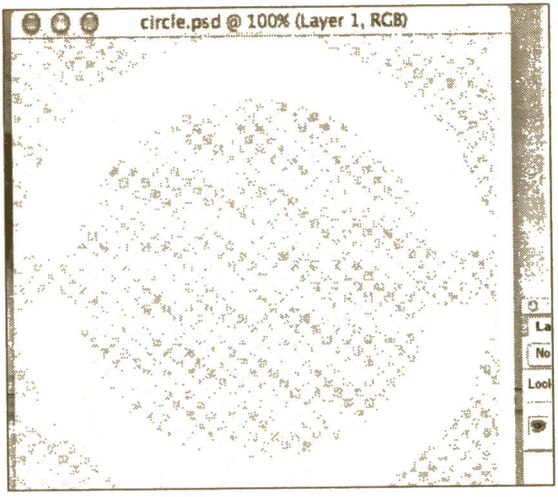


12 COPY THE FIGHTER

Copy the 'aircraft' layer by dragging it to the 'New layer' icon. Change the opacity back to 100% and change the blending mode to 'Vivid light'. Once you have done this, go to the 'Filter' menu and select 'Blur', 'Radial blur'. Change the options to 49% and make the method 'Zoom'.

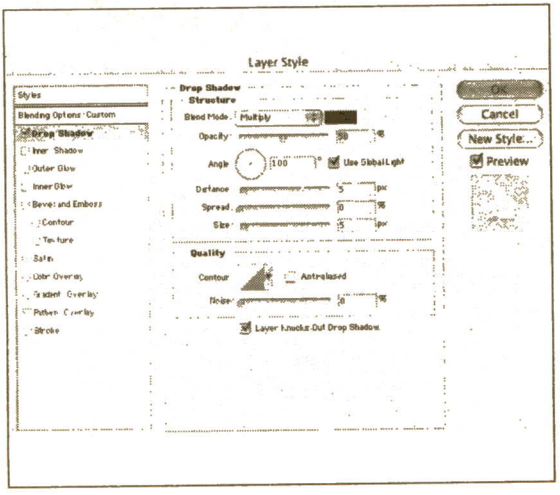


13 READY MADE CIRCLES



Open the 'circle.psd' from the cover CD and drag the circle onto the composition. Drag it below both of the aircraft layers, changing the opacity to 50% and the blending mode to 'Lighten'. Then double-click the layer (not on the text) to bring up the Layer Styles dialog box.

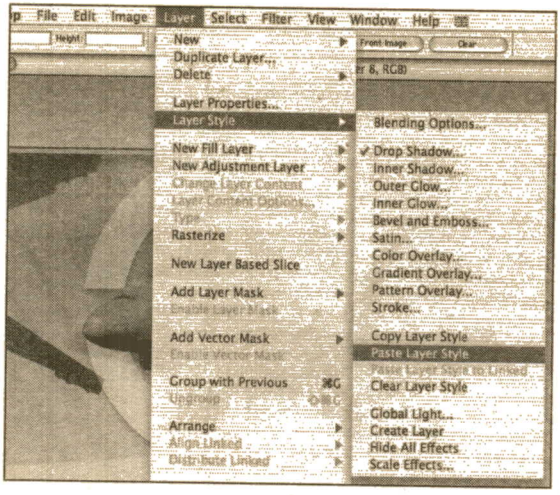
14 LAYER STYLE



The Layer Style dialog box lets you make all sorts of changes to the way a layer looks, but for now we just want to add a drop shadow. Click on the 'Drop shadow' options and change the angle to 100 and then reduce the opacity to 50%. When you're finished, click 'OK'.

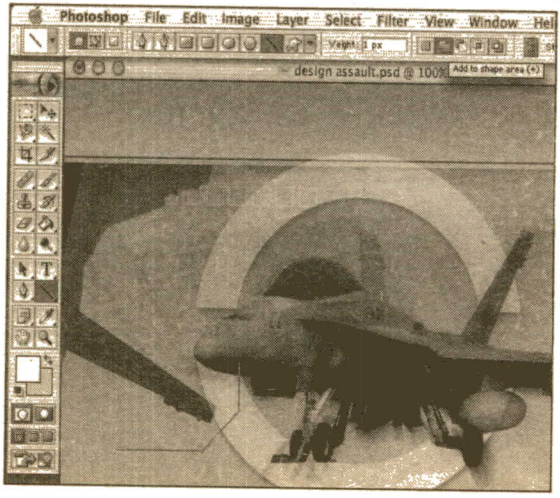
15 BOX CLEVER

Open the 'boxes.psd' image from the cover CD and drag it over into the composition. Change the blending layer to 'Luminosity', then select the 'Circle' layer. From the Layer menu, select 'Layer style' and 'Copy style', then select the 'box' layer and paste this style from the same menu.

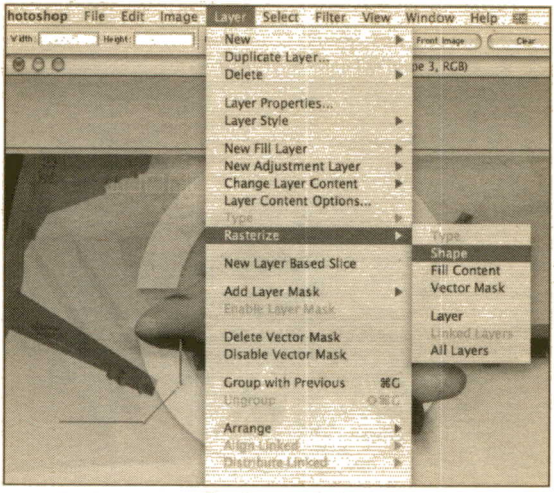


16 SHAPE LAYER

Use the 'Shape' tool to create a vector shape layer and choose the 'Line' tool to change the foreground colour to white. Draw a horizontal line and choose the 'Add to shape area' option as shown. Draw a diagonal line and then a vertical line until you have a shape as shown.

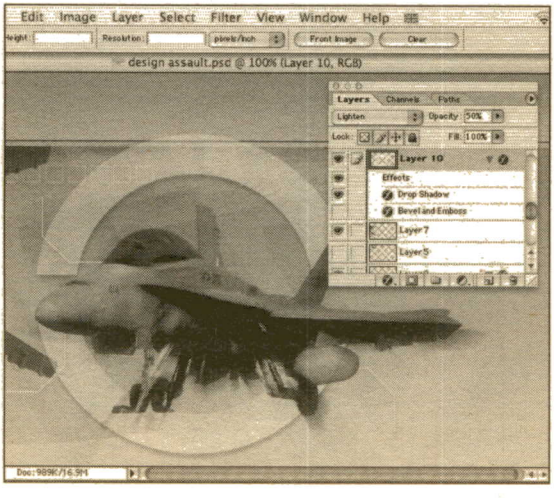


17 RASTERIZE



This refers to changing the layer to be pixel-based. Go to the 'Layer' menu and choose 'Rasterize', 'Shape' for the layer to change. You can then paste in the layer style by going to 'Layer', 'Layer style' and 'Paste style'. This will insert your drop shadow.

18 COPY THE LAYER



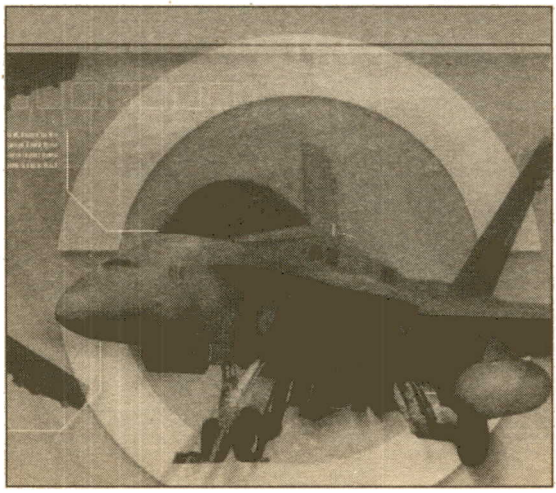
Copy this layer by dragging the layer down to the 'New layer' icon on the Layer palette. Position the three layers as shown. You need to flip the layers to get the desired result so flip one layer vertically and one horizontally using the 'Edit', 'Transform' menus.

19 TEXT MESSAGING

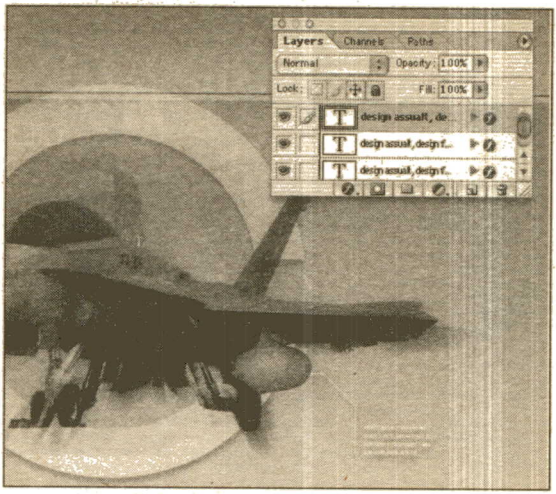
Click the 'Text' tool and make sure you have white as the foreground colour – this will be the colour of the typed text. Choose a really small font – we've chosen 2pt so that it's completely unreadable. This is to add some interest to the design.

20 MESSAGE IN A WEB PAGE

Type out a quick message – it doesn't matter what as no-one's ever going to see it! Align it to the right and paste in the 'Layer' style from the 'Layer' menu and 'Layer style' option. Once again, this should paste in our drop shadow under the text, which helps disguise it further.

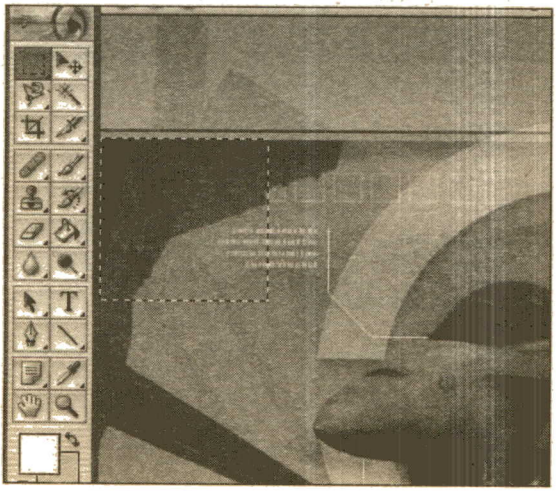


21 MORE TEXT PLEASE



Copy this text layer twice – you should know the routine by now – just drag it on to the 'New layer' icon. When you have your new layers, click on the 'Text' tool and change the alignment of the paragraph to the left. Do this for both layers and position the text by the lines drawn previously.

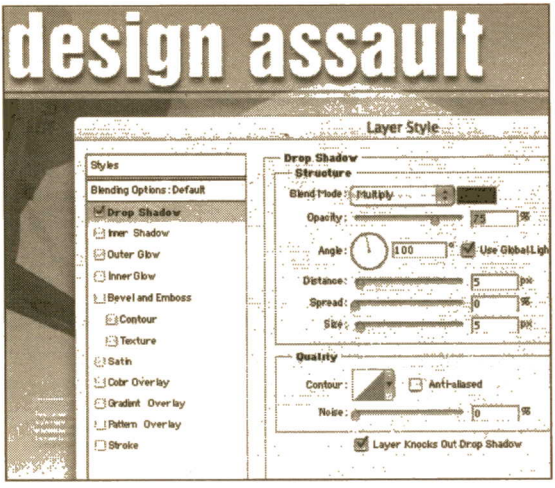
22 BACK TO THE WING



In the Layers menu, go back to the layer named 'wing'. Copy and paste part of the image and rotate it 90 degrees clockwise then position it as shown, changing the blending of the layer to 'Overlay'. This is to add some interest to the top of the image when we go to add our title.

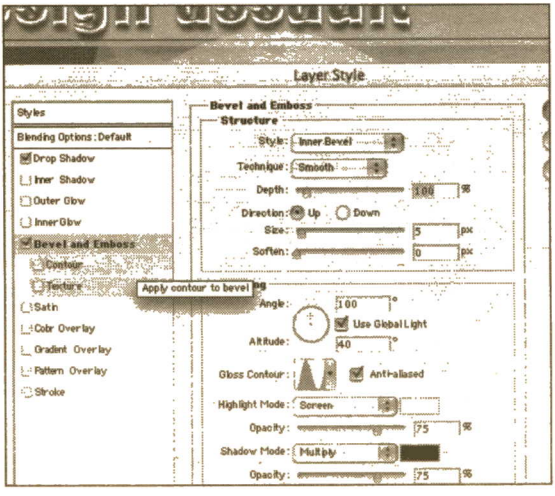
23 TITLES

Using the 'Text' tool, add the title to the Web page, we're using a compressed Arial style font in white here. When you've written it, double-click the layer to bring up the Layer Style option and click on the Drop Shadow tick box in order to add a drop shadow to the text.

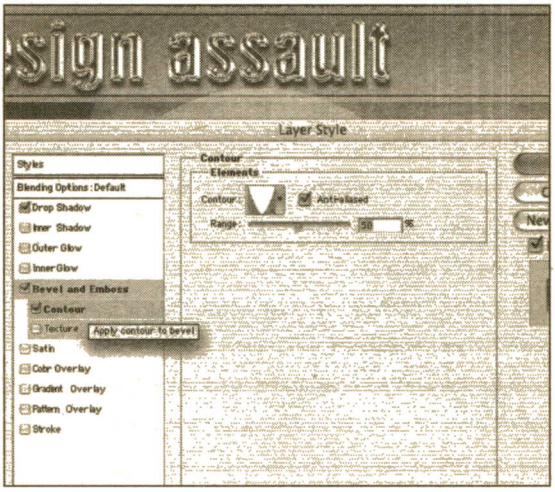


24 BEVELLED EDGE

Click the check box for the 'Bevel and emboss' option and set the altitude to '40'. Change the Gloss Contour to the option shown in the screenshot and click on 'Anti-aliased' just to give the bevel a more rounded finish. Finally, check to make sure all other options are the same.

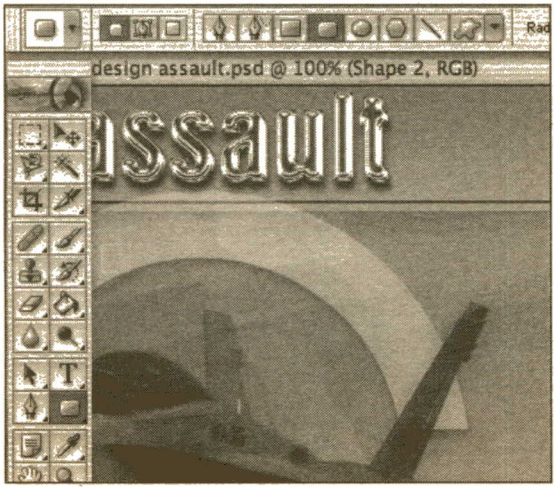


25 NICE CURVES!



Click on the 'Contour' check box and in the Properties, change the contour curve to be the same as shown. Now click 'OK' to apply the options to the image. After you've done this, go to the 'Layer' menu and from the 'Layer Style' option, select 'Copy style'.

26 CREATE A BUTTON



Draw a rounded rectangle with a corner radius of 10 pixels using the 'Rounded rectangle' vector shape layer. Go to the 'Layer' menu and choose 'Rasterize and shape'. You should have a similar shape to the one shown here, which can be used for the front-end's buttons.

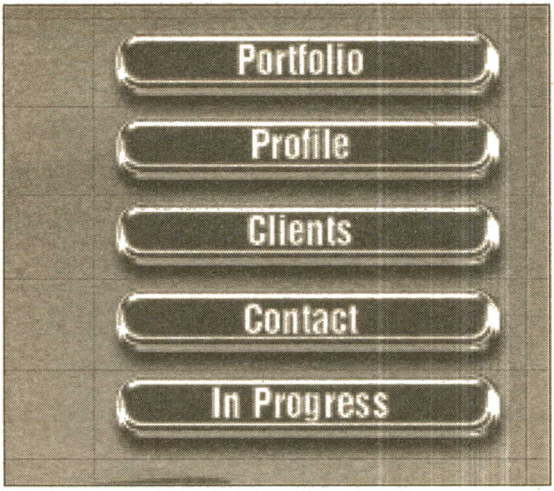
27 COPY THE BUTTONS

Paste the Layer style by clicking on the 'Layer' menu and then choosing 'Layer style' and 'Paste'. Copy the button layer in the same way as previously and repeat so you have a total of five layer buttons. After you have them all ready, position them as shown here.

28 ADD SOME TEXT

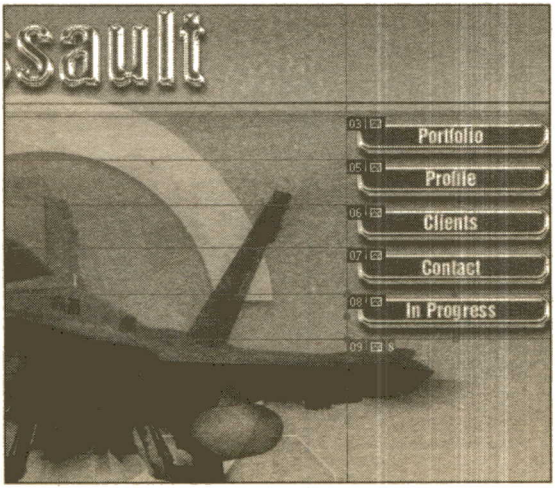
Using the 'Text' tool, add some relevant text to each of the buttons. It's quite handy if you centre your paragraph option as this will ensure that the text will be aligned centrally with the other buttons.

29 GUIDING LIGHT



If you haven't got your rulers on display, go to the 'View' menu and select 'Rulers'. Now click on the left ruler and drag a guide to the left of the buttons. Repeat this for the right side. From the top ruler, drag down the guides and position them around each of the buttons as shown here.

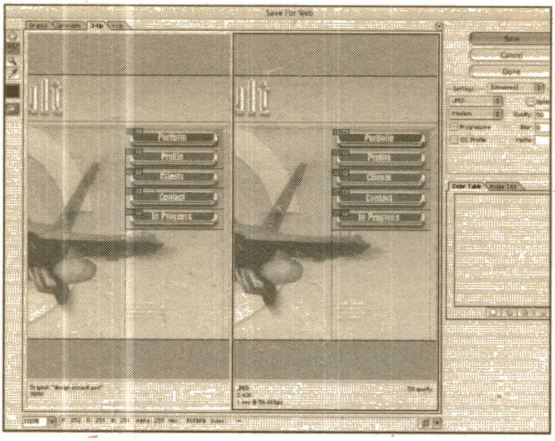
30 SLICE IT UP

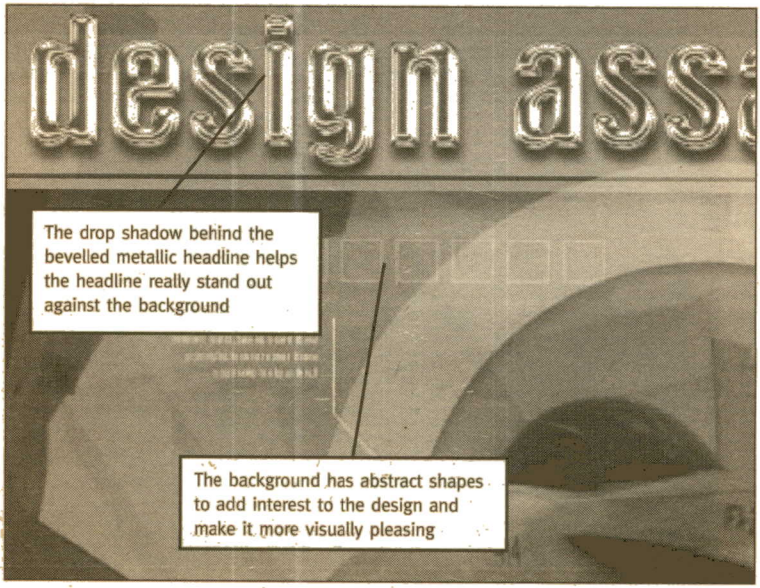


Click on the 'Slice' tool from the toolbar and draw around each of the buttons. Because you have drawn guides, the slices should snap to these automatically, making it easier to be accurate. You only need to draw around the buttons as Photoshop 7.0 will fill in the other slices.

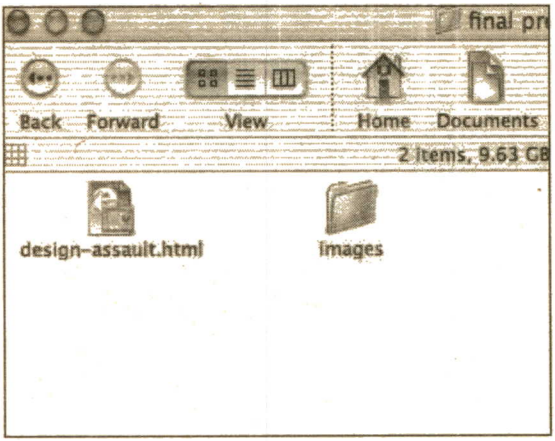
31 SAVE FOR WEB

Go to the 'File' menu and choose File', 'Save for Web'. In the Options box, select each slice and apply a different level of compression as necessary. When satisfied, click 'Save' and in the Options, make sure you select 'HTML and Images' to get the full page.

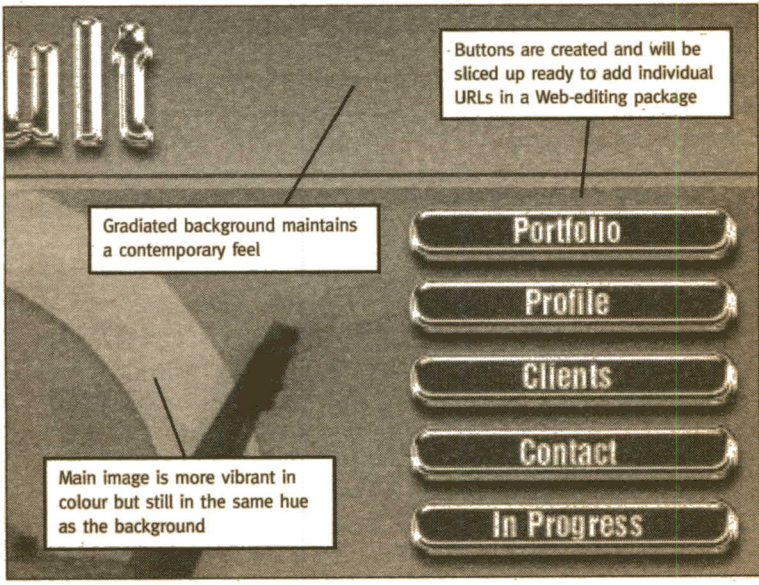



design ass
The drop shadow behind the bevelled metallic headline helps the headline really stand out against the background
The background has abstract shapes to add interest to the design and make it more visually pleasing

32 SAVED!

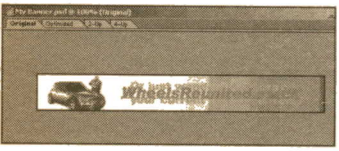


The HTML and images are saved, with the images placed in their own folder. You can now open your page in your HTML editing package and apply the links to each of the buttons so that you can navigate from page to page.


Buttons are created and will be sliced up ready to add individual URLs in a Web-editing package
Gradiated background maintains a contemporary feel
Portfolio
Profile
Clients
Contact
In Progress
Main image is more vibrant in colour but still in the same hue as the background

DESIGN YOUR OWN BANNER ADVERTS

IMAGEREADY IS PERFECT FOR CREATING ANIMATED GIFS IMAGES FOR A BANNER AD



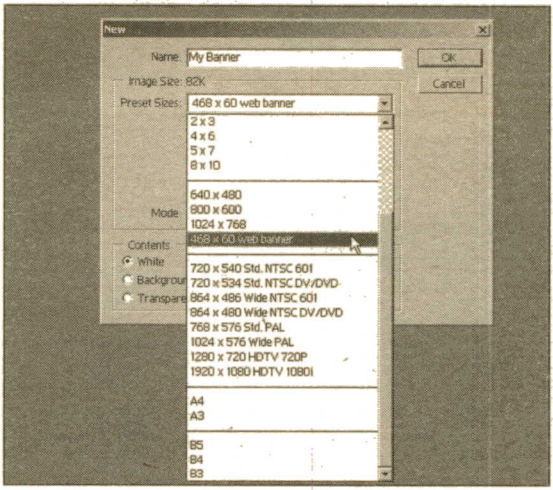
When the Web first started taking off, and animated GIF images rose in popularity alongside it, no cheesy personal home page was complete without an extremely irritating animated digging man with an 'under construction' notice. The novelty quickly wore off for most of us, but one area where the animated GIF has kept its popularity is in Web site banner ads.

Originally, the only place you'd see banner ads would be at the top and bottom of pages, and they were all pretty much the same size and shape. Nowadays, many sites display a much wider range of banner style ads, and the use of animation can really help to make them eye-catching. The hope is to attract the browsing user through to the advertised site. Love 'em or hate 'em, banner ads remain popular because – done right – they are an effective way of driving traffic to your site.

Although some people go the whole hog and create very complicated banner animations using Flash, for the most part a well crafted and attractive animated GIF is just as good at attracting attention, and Adobe ImageReady is a great tool for producing well-optimised animation files.

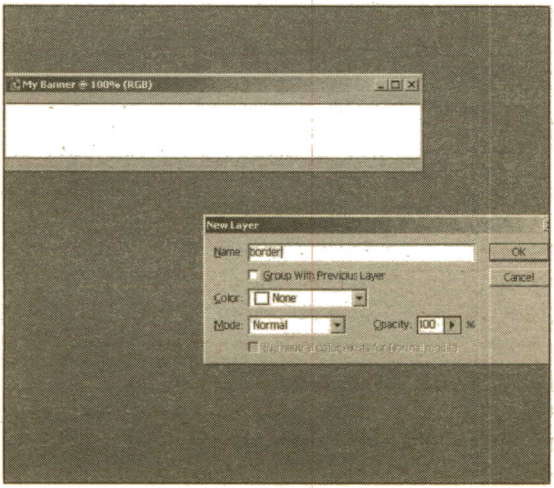
In this tutorial, we'll see how easy it is to get started in banner ad design, and how the seamless integration between Photoshop 7.0 and ImageReady makes it a piece of cake to implement your designs as a finished animation. We'll be designing a banner for a Friends Reunited-style site about old cars, but you can choose any subject matter you like.

01 GETTING STARTED



We'll create the essential graphics for our banner using Photoshop, although you could use Illustrator if you preferred. Open Photoshop and create a new 468 x 60 pixel document – this is one of the standard sizes for banner ads on the Web.

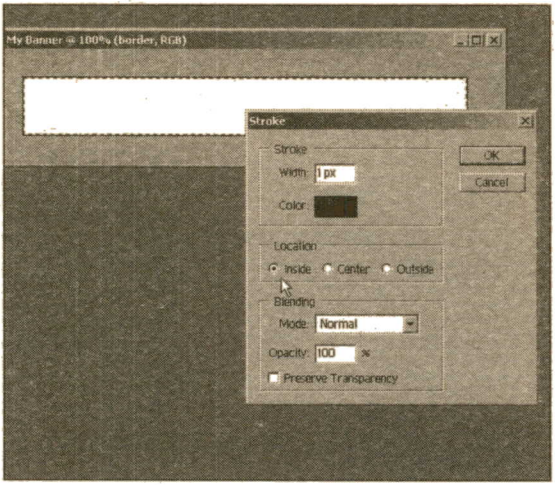
02 ADD A BORDER LAYER



Adding a border will help the banner ad stand out on the page. When creating different parts of our banner, add each in its own layer – this will help when it's time to add animation using ImageReady. Create a new layer by pressing 'SHIFT' and 'CTRL' and 'N', and then call it 'border'.

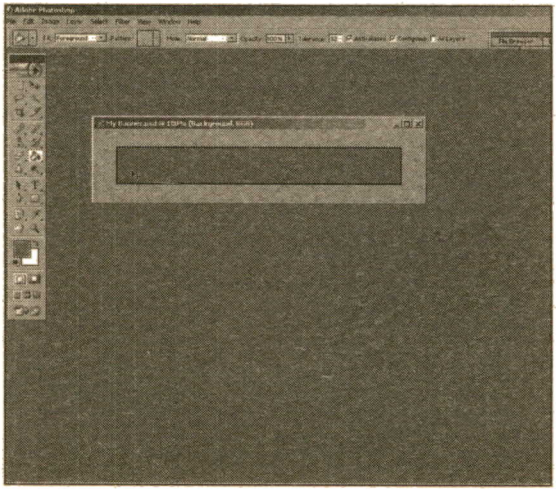
03 CREATE THE BORDER

Use the 'Rectangular Marquee' tool to select the whole of the new layer, and choose the colour (in this case, black) that you want for your border. Select 'Stroke' from the 'Edit 'menu, select a width of 1px and a location of 'Inside'. That's the border finished with.

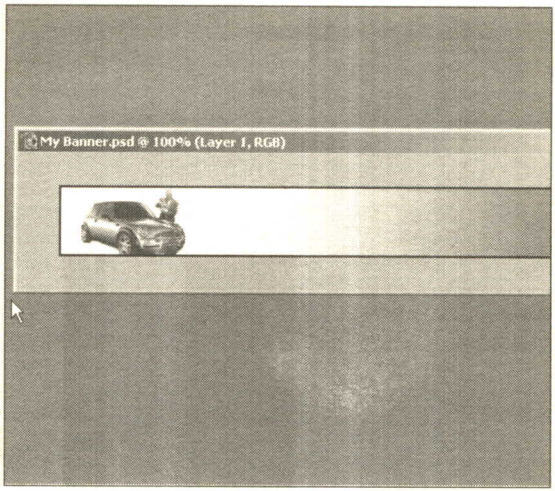


04 CREATE THE BACKGROUND

Let's create a background for our banner. In this example, we're going to go with a fairly standard layout – an image on the left of the banner, and a coloured backdrop on the right. We'll use this to create a text animation. Select the 'Background layer, and then fill with a colour or gradient.

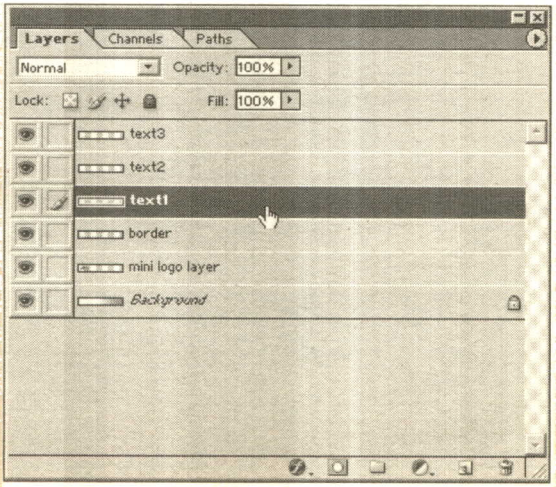


05 ADD A BACKGROUND IMAGE



Open the image called 'mini.jpg' from the cover CD and select and copy the whole image. Next, paste the image into a new layer in the banner ad, and move it over so that it's nearly flush with the border on the left-hand side.

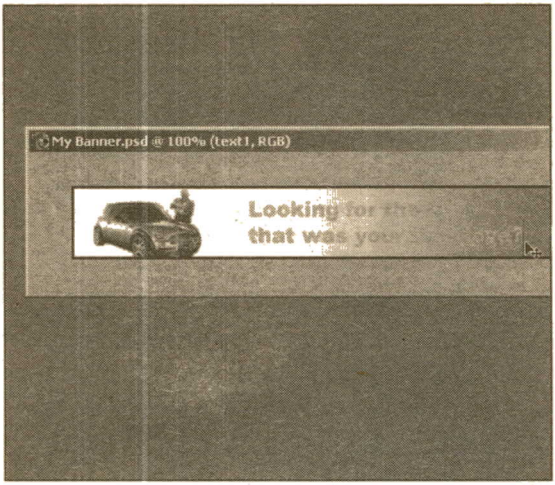
06 LAYERS FOR ANIMATION



In this example, we're going to animate a number of sections of text, so that the ad spells out a message in its animation. Add as many new layers as you want different animation stages – in this case we used three.

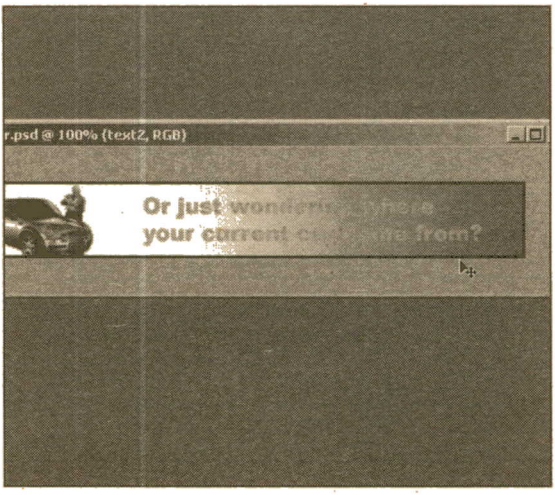
07 ADD THE INITIAL TEXT MESSAGE

Select the first text layer, and add the text you want to appear when the banner is first displayed. In this example, the first and second sections of text are 'teasers' for the final section. Choose the font you want, click on the banner, and then add your text.

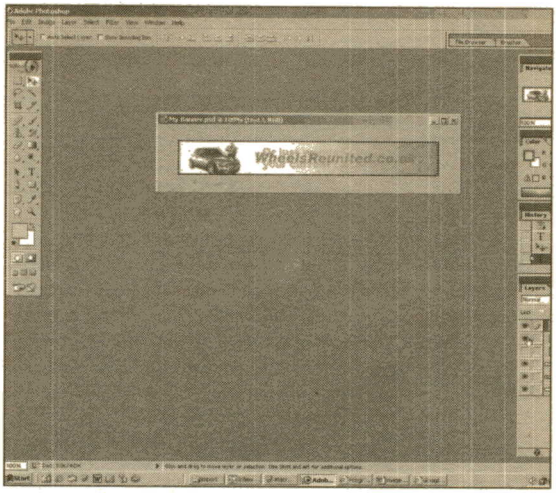


08 MORE ANIMATION LAYERS

Repeat step seven for the second text section of the animation – remember to add this piece of text into its own layer. Use the same font and colour as in the first text section. Display both layers at once so you know you've got them both in the same area on the banner.

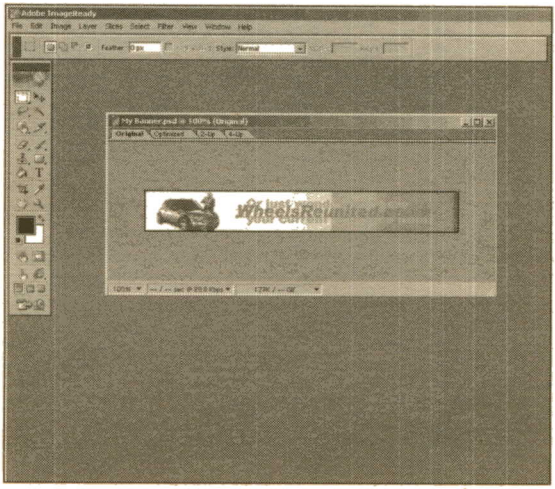


09 ADD THE FINAL LAYER



For the final stage of our animation, we want whoever's seeing the ad to know that it's the end of the animation – this is achieved by using a larger, deeper-coloured (and in this case, italic) font. We'll also make this stage of the animation pause.

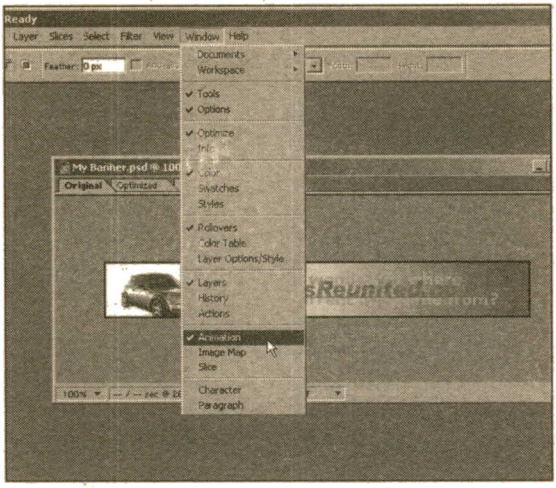
10 START IMAGEREADY



Now we've got all the layers for assembling our animated banner, it's time to switch to ImageReady. Either select 'Jump To',' Adobe ImageReady' from the 'File' menu, or use the keyboard shortcut: SHIFT + CTRL + M. You can work on the file seamlessly using both Photoshop and ImageReady.

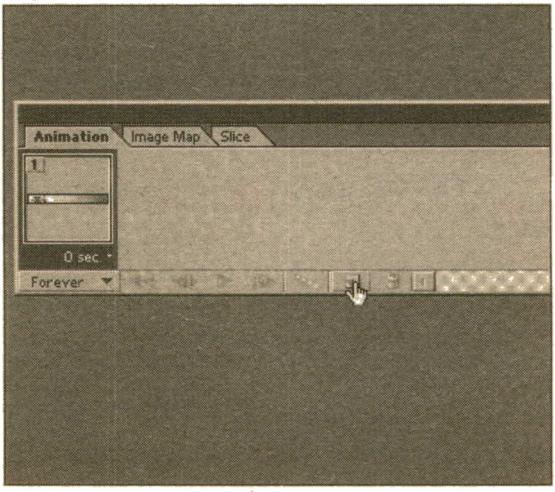
11 GET READY TO ANIMATE!

To animate the banner, you'll need to use the 'Animation' palette in ImageReady. If this isn't already visible, turn it on by picking the 'Animation' option from the 'Window' menu. When it appears you'll see a single animation frame with a tiny version of the banner in it.

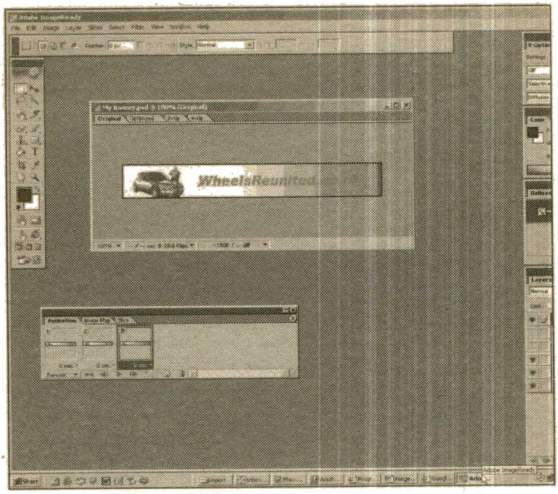


12 ADD ANIMATION FRAMES

We want our sections of text to appear one after another, each staying visible for a couple of seconds. Click on the 'Duplicates Current Frame' icon on the 'Animations' palette twice, to create three frames in total. At this stage, they'll all have the same contents.

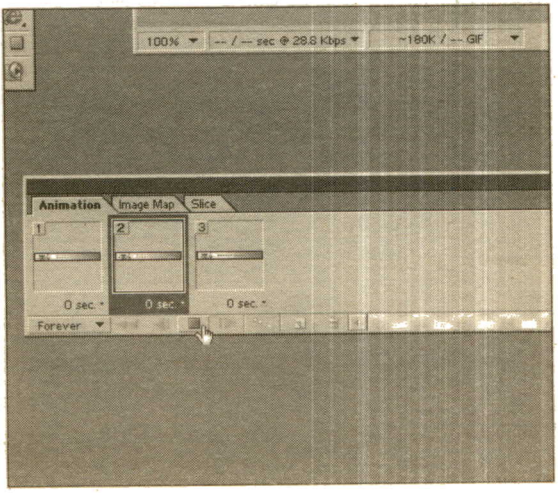


13 THE BASIC ANIMATION



Select each frame of the animation in turn and in each one, display the appropriate layer. This is to make sure that only one of the three text layers is visible in each frame and that they appear in the correct order.

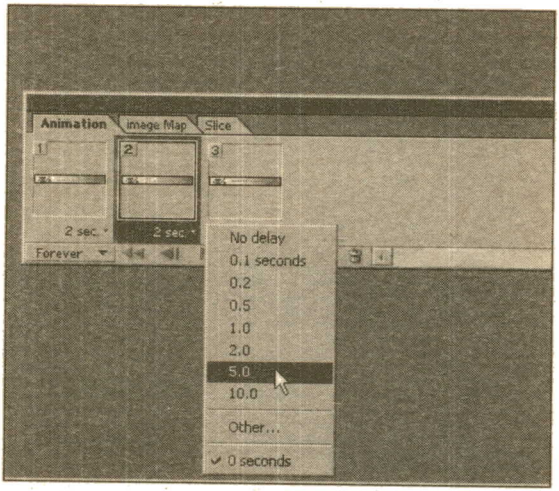
14 PLAY THE ANIMATION



You'll have noticed that as soon as you added a second and third frame to the animation, a set of play/stop/FF/REW style controls appeared on the Animation palette. If you click the 'Play' button, you'll see your animation zip along at a nippy pace.

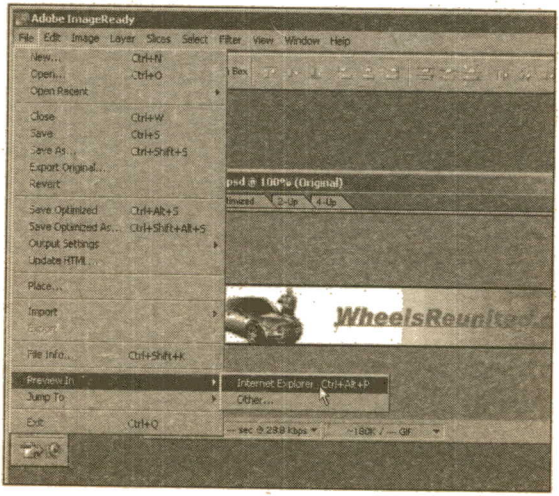
15 CHANGE THE TIMING

Select each frame in turn and use the 'Timing' drop-down to change how long each frame is displayed for before the animation moves on. Initially, try setting the first two frames to display for two seconds, and the third for five seconds. Try the 'Play' icon to see the results.

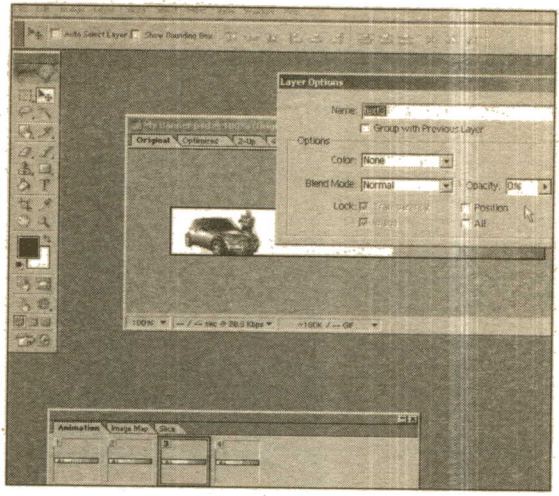


16 CHECK THE ANIMATION

Although the animation preview within ImageReady is a handy tool, it's probably a good idea to check what the animation looks like in an actual Web browser before we go any further. Select 'Preview In', 'Internet Explorer' from the 'File' menu, and see the results of your handiwork.

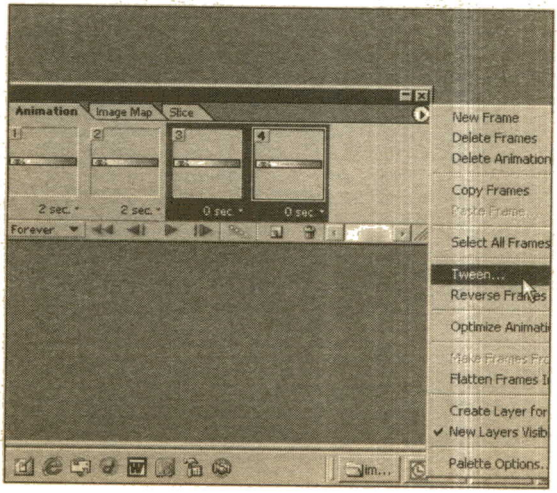


17 ADVANCED ANIMATION



Although our banner so far isn't too bad, let's make it a little flashier by having the final text section 'fade in' – we'll do this using 'tweening'. Select the third frame, set the time to '0' sec for now, and click on the 'Duplicates Current Frame' icon again.

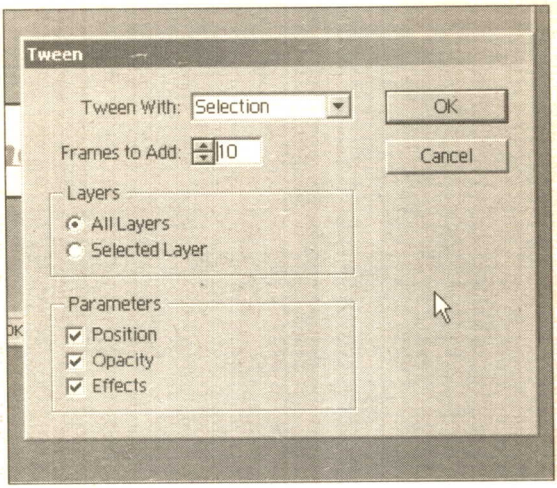
18 ADD A TWEEN



In the third frame, set the opacity of the text layer to '0'. Shift-click the third and fourth frames so they're both selected, and click on the 'arrow' icon at the top-right of the Animations palette. Now select 'Tween' from the menu that appears.

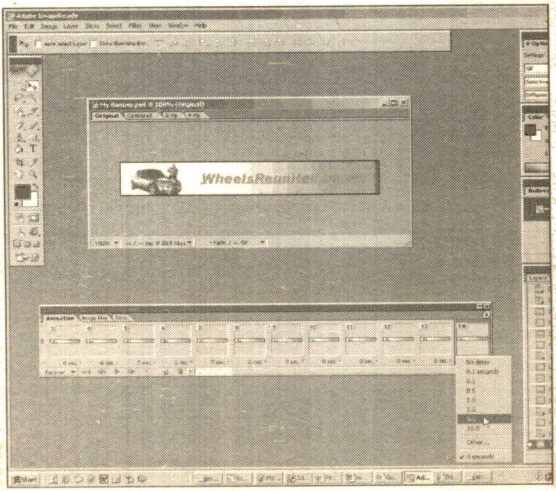
19 SET UP THE TWEEN

You'll see the Tween dialog box appear. We want a fairly smooth fade in, so let's choose to add 10 new frames. We want to see the border and background during the tween, so make sure that the 'All Layers' radio button is checked. Now click on 'OK' to create the tween.

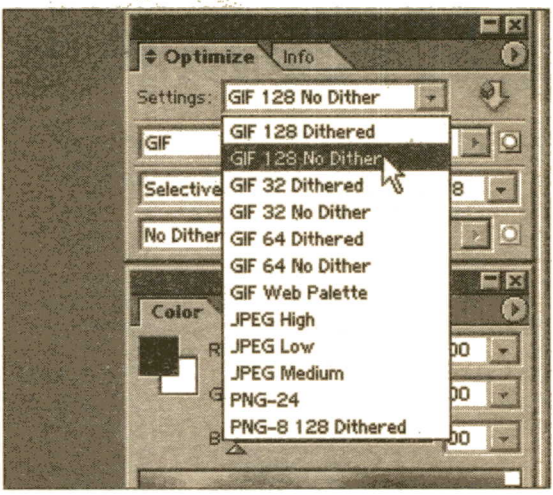


20 FINISH THE ANIMATION

That's pretty much it – nearly done. The last thing we need to do is set the very last frame of the animation back to display for five seconds. Once you've done this, preview using the 'Play' button on the animation palette and in a Web browser.

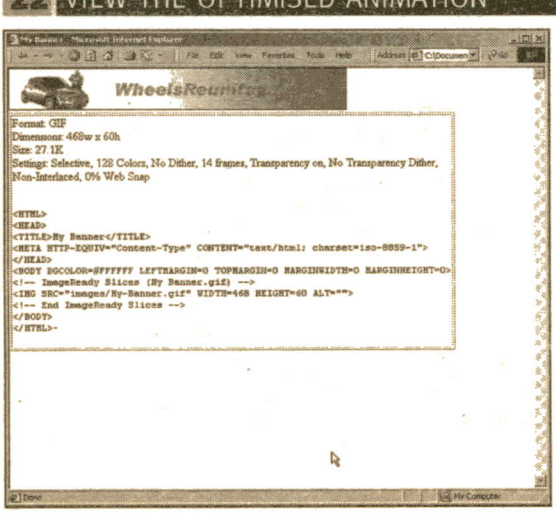


21 OPTIMISING THE ANIMATION



Currently, the animation is creating a final GIF file just over 40K – this is a bit on the large side, so let's see if we can reduce this. Try some of the drop-down options in the 'Optimize' palette – choosing 128 colour GIF shouldn't affect the image quality too much.

22 VIEW THE OPTIMISED ANIMATION



Preview the animation in IE again – the animation is down to 27K or so. Choose 'Save Optimized' to finish off. Just one thing left to do and that's add code to link the banner to a Web site – cut and paste the ImageReady code into an editor and add <a> tags around the banner image.

GLOSSARY

BAFFLED BY TERMS LIKE TRANSFORM AND SLICING? LET THIS HANDY PHOTOSHOP JARGON BUSTER ENLIGHTEN YOU

CROP
This is a handy tool that lets you draw a box around the area of a picture that you'd like to keep. In Photoshop Elements, everything outside of this is faded out, to make the process easier. Selecting this discards everything outside of the highlighted box.

FREE ROTATE
While many of the rotation effects in Photoshop Elements are predefined, this tool allows you to drag the image to any angle you choose. This is perfect for fine-tuning an image, however, choosing an angle is still the best method for turning a picture over.

PIXEL
A 'picture element' is an individual dot of colour, millions of which go to make an image. A pixel is the smallest unit of information stored in a picture, and can be altered individually through an editing program like Photoshop.

SKEW
This option basically drags the pixels of the image in a sidewards direction. This creates a unique effect, and allows you to quickly and easily change the way your image looks.

THUMBNAIL
A small version of a larger image. This is used to display the basic outline and contents of an image, but cramming it all into a much smaller file size. This allows you to see what is coming, without having to look at the larger picture.

SATURATION
This is as it sounds, and relates to the level by which the 'hue' effect is applied to your image. A high saturation simply means that the image is 'saturated' with the colour changes, while a low value simply means that any changes are applied sparingly.

DIMENSIONS
This is simply the size, in pixels, of the image you're working on.

RESOLUTION
The resolution relates to the number of pixels contained within a pre-defined area of the picture. Because of this, the resolution is independent to the dimensions. While the dimensions deal exclusively with size, the resolution relates to the quality of the image. Given as a pixels-per-inch rating, the higher the resolution, the more pixels are crammed into each and every inch of your picture, making for a higher quality picture.

CONSTRAIN PROPORTIONS

When you're tinkering with your picture, it's easy to accidentally change one of the dimensions, and leave the image lopsided. The 'Constrain Proportions' option gets rid of this risk, as it maintains the 'Aspect Ratio' of the picture, or the ratio of width to height.

FILTERS

Taken from the traditional method of placing a 'filter' in front of a camera lens to change the captured image, filters allow you to alter the look of a picture. Although they vary widely in their impact and effectiveness, every effect changes individual colours and shapes of an image to alter it in a subtle way.

EFFECTS

Even though this term is often used interchangeably with 'filters', effects actually perform a different function in Photoshop Elements. An effect will transform the image in question wholesale, while filters are for more subtle alterations. If a filter is designed with the original image as the most important thing, then an effect takes the alteration itself as the starting point – with the image becoming of secondary importance.

STYLES

These are different from effects and filters, mainly because they can only be applied to whole layers, instead of selected sections. Unfortunately there is less flexibility with styles, as you're strictly limited to the supplied effects.

LENS FLARE

This is an effect which makes your image appear as if a light is shining on it, causing parts of it to flare. Although this is most often used for photographic effects, we've used it to create the appearance of a sun shining through a planet.

BATCH CONVERSION

The process by which you perform the same task on a number of different files. In graphics packages, this usually refers to a series of images being converted from one type to another. The idea of a batch conversion is to save valuable time by avoiding repetitive tasks.

CONTACT SHEET

A sheet or page filled with thumbnails of a series of images. Contact Sheets allow people to see the contents of a photo collection without having to bother with the larger images.

SCRATCH DISK

An area of your hard drive that acts as a cache for a particular program. This helps speed up operations by ensuring that recently used files are always at hand.

LAYER BLENDING MODES

There are various ways for you to blend layers together and achieve fantastic artistic results.

WEB SAFE PALETTE

This is a particular palette of colours, which takes different computer Operating Systems into consideration. It means that if you stick to using colours only from this select palette, then there is less risk that your finished Web graphics will display differently. This will ensure that they look the same on both a Windows PC or Apple Macintosh machine.

PLUG-INS

These are small add-on files for Photoshop that allow you to create lots of impressive effects and styles within your documents. Using these filters you

can turn a simple design into a subtle work of art or an over-the-top show of colour and creativity.

DROP SHADOW

One of the many effects available to you when you're using Photoshop. It's possible to add a shadow effect to any object on your canvas area. This is the perfect way of adding some depth and perspective to your documents. You can apply other variants on this in many different ways, so it's well worth experimenting.

JPEG

This is a file format used for compressing digital photographic images and stands for Joint Photographic Experts Group. This is widely regarded as the best way to save photos, due to the fact that you can compress images on a sliding scale, often without losing overall quality. However, the downside to this format is that if you over-compress the image it will noticeably lose its quality and become full of distortion. These are known as artefacts.

PNG

The PNG format, meanwhile, stands for Portable Network Graphic and is a bit of a newcomer to the Web compression area. This works in a similar fashion to the GIF format and is ideal for Web logos and other similar solid colour objects on your HTML page. As with GIF, PNG is not an ideal format for photographic images due to the heavy compression

SLICES

An image can be sliced up ready for rollovers to be added or URLs attached to buttons. Photoshop can't handle rollovers in the same document, but it's pretty easy to adapt and most Web-editing packages can add rollovers once two states of the graphic have been produced.

MAGNETIC LASSO

This Photoshop tool scours an image for differences in colour. When any variations are found, the tool automatically snaps to the pixels between that colour difference. It's a quick and easy way to cut out objects.

GRADIENT TOOL

This fills areas with a gradient, which can be determined between the foreground and background colour, and with presets stored in Photoshop.

LAYERS

This is the industry-standard method of building up images by splitting them into different sections. This works by piling a load of different elements on top of each other, while allowing you to keep complete control over everything.

LAYER STYLES

Easily the best part of Photoshop Elements for the novice Web designer, this great section lets you turn even the blandest of elements into stunning graphics. How? Well, each layer style is actually a collection of several filters piled on top of each other to provide one cohesive effect. With this, the people at Adobe have managed to put the kind of effects normally reserved for graphical experts in your hands.

SIMPLIFY

Every time you make a significant change to a layer, you'll notice that an icon appears in the Layer palette. This indicates that you need to simplify the layer for the changes to be rendered properly – it's kind of like having to restart a program when you make a change to it.

RASTERIZE
This is when a vector layer, which is a series of mathematical points (so it can be scaled up and down without losing quality), is then translated into an exact pixel equivalent. This layer will appear pixelated if it's scaled up.

GUIDES
These are not visible in your final saved document when exported for the Web, but they help you to line items up.

VECTOR
A vector image is a set of mathematical instructions that describes the shapes, lines, and their spatial relationships in a picture. Rather than storing a huge pile of bytes to describe each pixel's colour content (as bitmapped images do), vector graphics store only these relationships, making them smaller, and re-sizeable without loss of quality.

ANTI-ALIAS
A process where the edges of a shape are made to look less jagged. It does this by blending the boundary colours together with intermediate shades.

LOSSLESS COMPRESSION
When saving an image as a GIF, Photoshop compresses the image as much as it can, but – unlike a JPEG – no information in your original image is thrown away.

TRANSPARENCY
GIF images can be saved with a specified colour transparency – the colour in the image that will show the background of the Web page through it. You should avoid using transparencies for banner ads, though, as you won't be in control of the background where the ad will appear.

INTERLACED
The ability to create GIFs as interlaced was in preparation for slow download times, so that the image would appear as a blurry version of itself as it downloaded. You might as well avoid these for banner ads, as the whole point is to create a quick-to-download image.

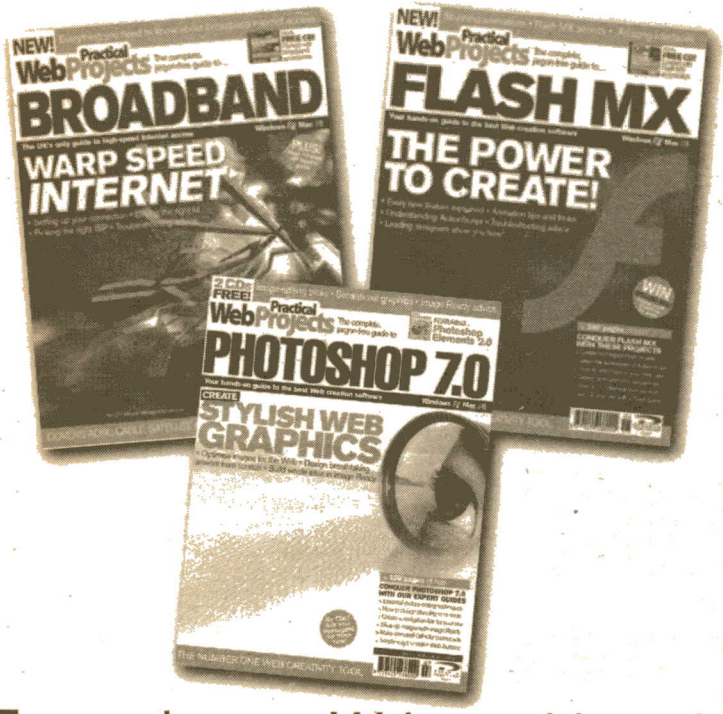
TWEENING
Tweening is a standard animation term for taking two different frames and automatically creating a series of frames that animate the difference between them.

OPTIMIZATION
The act of reducing some of the information held in an image – but not necessarily apparent to the viewer – so that the resultant file size is lower.

PALETTE
In Photoshop Elements, this usually refers to any of the moveable options windows that control certain features and functions of the program. Be careful not to confuse this with the Colour palette, which is a set of options in one of the larger palettes – effectively making it a colour palette palette.

FLATTEN
As the name suggests, this is a way of compressing all the layers in an image into one. This is particularly useful when you have loads of layers, and want to simplify your image. Remember that TIFs and JPEGs are all single-layer files, so you'll need to flatten most images at some point.

Practical Web Projects



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